

THE SHIELD AND SWORD

(continuation)

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Within a few days, Weiss left to return to Germany.

Hauptmann instructed him to tell Schellenberg personally that the chief was inclined to support the candidature that had been planned, but that the announcement of the new Führer should be timed only with the allied troops' landing--otherwise, the consequences of this operation could be used by anti-government elements.

Weiss sent several reports to the Center from Bern via the communication link that Prof. Scutthof had indicated to him. He also managed to pass on what Col. Hauptmann had told him orally.

The guard officer on the German border handed Weiss an order to leave the car and to fly to Berlin immediately.

On the plane, there turned out to be only four passengers aside from himself. They appeared not to be acquainted with each other and did not attempt to strike up any acquaintance. The whole way, not one of them said a word, but when the plane landed at the reserve airport and Weiss stepped off the gangway onto the ground, the passenger who was walking next to him locked a pair of handcuffs on him with a lightning-like movement. At the same moment, another passenger who was walking behind him threw an overcoat on Johann so that his bound hands would not be visible. The other two stood by on each side.

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A car drove right out onto the landing field. Two officers in Gestapo uniforms were sitting in it. The door swung open, Weiss' companions shoved him into the car, and continued to walk lazily toward the airport building as if nothing had happened.

Nothing could be seen through the painted windows of the car.

Turning to the Gestapo men, Weiss said:

"You work well."

"We've had some experience", responded one of them.

"But perhaps you've made a mistake?" asked Weiss and explained threateningly: "I'm a Senior Lieutenant in the SD."

"Yes?" asked the same one. And, grinning, he added: "All kinds of things happen. Sometimes we have generals who cry like babies."

"Let me have a smoke", Weiss asked.

A cigarette was put into his mouth and lighted.

Weiss nodded and said with praise in his voice:

"Well, it turns out you guys can be polite."

"For variety's sake", laughed the Gestapo man who had been carrying on the conversation from the beginning.

"You're a joker", noted Weiss.

"Right", he agreed. "A real comedian!" He again lit the lighter and brought it right up to Weiss' nose

Johann turned his head aside.

"Knock it off", said the other with dissatisfaction, finally opening his mouth. "You'll stink up the whole car."

"Never mind, let him get used to it." And the first Gestapo man again brought the lighter up to Weiss' face.

The skin on his chin wrinkled up, but this time Weiss remained motionless.

"A tough nut!" said the first one.

"So what, we've cracked tougher ones", remarked the other one gloomily.

They wrapped Johann's head in the coat. The car stopped. They lifted him up and took him, first over flagstones and then downwards somewhere on the same sort of stone stairs. On the way they searched him unhurriedly.

Finally they twisted the coat off Johann's head and he saw a narrow cement room with a low vault. An iron folding cot, a folding table, a sanitary pail. A 100-watt bulb filled the cell with blinding, sharp light. There was a peep-hole in the dark door.

The door slammed. A short time later the guard appeared again, brought him prison clothing, and ordered Weiss to change his clothes, after first checking him over carefully, even the inside of his mouth.

Johann submitted silently for he understood that any protest was senseless.

When Weiss had changed into the striped clothing, the guard noted approvingly:

"Well, you're not a nervous one!"

"What do you mean, do they only jail nervous people here?" asked Weiss.

"You'll see", the guard promised and left with his clothes. He threw a smoking cigarette butt onto the floor but at first Johann could not yet appreciate this act of the greatest generosity at its full value.

For more than a month, Weiss was not called out for interrogation.

During all this time, he painstakingly and logically went over his double life in his memory--as a Soviet intelligence agent and a member of the German secret service.

He thought it over from all sides, like an investigator, and lined one up against the other in a search for negligence, omissions, and evidence.

He measured his activities as a Soviet intelligence agent in every way, first looking at it from the point of view of a

Baryshev, then studying it from a distance with the cruel insight of a Gestapo man or with the refined suspiciousness of his supervisors in the German secret service.

The thought came to him more than once that he had become a victim of the secret struggle for primacy and power between the chiefs of the German secret service. This thought was after all a consolation.

There was just one thing that seemed to him to be the most terrible thing of all, namely, that he, as a Soviet intelligence agent, had slipped up somewhere, at some time, had made some inexcusable mistake...And what if one of those he had been connected with had made that error?

He thought of those people who made up the "chain" in the Wally staff. He brought each of them back to life and placed his own life in their hands. A tiny bit of himself was somehow contained in each of them. No, he could not defile himself by doubting them.

But somewhere something had snapped in that chain, if he were here...

He thought of Zubov who had often disregarded precautionary measures with the self-assurance of a reckless hero. But this shortcoming in Aleksey was made up for by his desperate resoluteness and ingenuity. Once, during a military operation, a bullet hit Zubov in the soft part of the leg. Zubov sat down, pressed the bullet out of the wound, tossed it back and forth, and said, gritting his white teeth:

"Well, now I can walk without baggage."

And he walked on, barely limping.

No, Zubov always found a way out of the most dangerous situations...

Weiss carried out all the regulations of prison life with particular discipline and even won the guards' respect by doing so. He brought the stone floor to a high polish with a brush and even washed down the walls with a rag. His prison property, a bowl and a spoon, shone. Three times a day he did physical exercises, rubbed himself down with a towel soaked in water in the pitcher, and took long walks back and forth in the cell which were several thousands strides long. And he occupied himself with reading his favorite books by reconstructing what he had once read in his memory.

His favorite books about the feats of revolutionaries served for Weiss as his university while he was in prison. And there were also his father's stories--his father had spent many years in solitary confinement before the revolution. His father had turned his cell into a sort of classroom--he studied foreign languages using self-teaching books and read things that he had never had time to read at other times.

Giving free rein to his imagination, Weiss threw himself mentally back into the past where the elder Belov's feat had had its start. It was as if he were continuing this feat here. The Gestapo prison seemed like a tsarist torture-chamber. And it appeared on him that he was living during the time when Lenin was still only Vladimir Ul'yanov and the Bolsheviks' struggle for the people's freedom had just begun.

For the complete realism of this feeling, however, one thing was still missing--Weiss could not get rid of the awareness that he was merely repeated the elders' feat like an apprentice and that he was travelling along a known path, already trained in the moral rules, the violation of which would be tantamount to treason.

He was also alarmed by the fact that, torn away from the outside world by his imprisonment and alone with himself, he was beginning to lose Johann Weiss' traits. The identity of Aleksander Belov showed through ever more distinctly within him and his whole recent German existence faded away like a mirage, like something that had been made up and had never existed.

Belov then was forced to begin working selflessly and minutely on his own will, using all his strength, in an attempt to preserve Weiss within himself. He forced himself to renounce Sasha Belov's memories which were so comforting to him and to limit himself within the sphere of the memories of the German Johann Weiss, a member of the German secret service arrested illegally and without any reason by the Gestapo.

The investigator, a balding, stoop-shouldered man in civilian clothes only called Weiss out in the second month of Weiss' imprisonment. With indifferent politeness, he asked him only a few general form questions.

Weiss' protests against his unjustified arrest were listened to by the investigator with a certain amount of attention. The latter was meanwhile picking his ears with a match after which, placing the match neatly back into its box, he inquired:

"Do you have any complaints against the prison administrations?"

Weiss said:

"Not yet."

"Then sign here." And the investigator shoved over to Weiss a printed form in which it was stated that the prisoner had no complaints to the administration of the prison.

Weiss smiled maliciously:

"I said 'Yet'." Leaning forward toward the investigator, he asked: "I'm pretty well acquainted with these methods of yours--first the prisoner signs a thing like that and then we beat the hell out of him, right?"

The investigator put the form silently back into his folder and ordered the guard:

"Take the prisoner away!"

The next day Weiss was again summoned to an interrogation.

This time the investigator looked completely different. But he was not transformed by the Gestapo uniform alone. He was evidently inspired by something. Looking Weiss over from head to foot, and rubbing his hands with a satisfied look, the investigator read his statement and asked if he confirmed them.

Weiss said:

"Yes, I do."

The investigator's face immediately took on a cruel and imperious expression.

"You're lying, you're not Weiss!" he shouted.

"Then who am I?"

"That's what we're still going to beat out of you!" He hesitated, enjoying his unmasking of the criminal, and then declared triumphantly: "Herr Oberleutenant Johann Weiss, the one you passed yourself off for, is dead. He was killed in an automobile accident!" The investigator rummaged through his folder, found two photographs, and handed them to Weiss.

On the first one was the wreckage of a car, upside down, the courier Johann knew impaled on the steering column, and next to him another corpse with its face smashed against the windshield.

Only the corpse of the man with the smashed face was shown in the second snapshot. When he saw that the corpse was dressed in the suit which had been taken away from him on his first day of imprisonment, Weiss experienced a feeling of relief. This meant that everything had been staged by the Gestapo and that he had been captured not as a Soviet intelligence agent, but as a member of Schellenberg's service.

Weiss threw both photographs carelessly onto the table and said:

"To bad for the guy!"

"Who do you mean exactly?" said the investigator, raising his eyebrows.

"The courier you killed. You did such a job on the second, that you put my suit on, that not only I but his own mother wouldn't recognize him. Well, I recognize the traditional methods of the Gestapo." He leaned forward and asked, "So what's behind all this trouble you've gone to?"

The investigator kept the same undisturbed expression on his face as if Weiss were talking in a language unknown to him which he did not understand. After a moment of hesitation, the investigator asked:

"Now admit that you're not the man you say you are."

"Don't treat me like a fool", said Weiss.

"Are you still counting on something?", said the investigator looking up at Weiss. He took a third photograph and smiled as he handed it to him: "Draw a reasonable conclusion from this."

In the photograph there was a bier with an urn and on the urn, a plate marked "Johann Weiss". There were other smaller inscriptions on the plate but he could not decipher them. The bier was carried by Heinrich Schwarzkopf, Gustav, and Franz. Weiss did not know the fourth man. Behind the bier was Schellenberg himself and next to it, Willy Schwarzkopf.

"Well?" asked the investigator. "Is everything clear to you now? Oberleutenant Weiss is dead and his ashes are immured in that urn. Johann Weiss no longer exists."

"Tell me", inquired Weiss, "did that poor devil that you killed in place of me really deserve such honored treatment at his funeral? If the Brigadenfuhrer ever finds out that he's been

a pawn in your operation, a lot of you are in for trouble, and you among them."

These words obviously had no effect on the investigator and fear flashed in his eyes. He stood up and stated in an official tone of voice:

"Prisoner 2016, your guilt is being compounded by your making the false statements in which I have just now caught you by means of irrefutable photographic documentation."

A few days later, the investigator again summoned Weiss. But now, in addition to him, two other men in civilian clothes were present at the interrogation. The investigator took a new photograph out of the folder. In it, Weiss had been snapped next to the car in which he had travelled to Switzerland as a courier and carrier of valuables.

The investigator asked him:

"Can you verify that the man in the photograph is you?"

It seems so. It looks like me."

"Yes or no?"

Weiss was silent.

The investigator declared:

"It definitely is you."

In the second photograph Weiss had been snapped in the Swiss bank, and in the third was printed a document with the signatures of Weiss and a bank clerk certifying that ten kilograms of gold in 20 ingots had been received from Weiss.

"Is that your signature?" asked the Investigator.

"But you said Johann Weiss was dead and no one knew who I am."

The investigator said loudly and distinctly:

"Our investigation had proved that you are Weiss, a man with the same name as the Oberleutenant Johann Weiss who was killed in an automobile accident." He shouted. "Stand up!"

Weiss stood up unwillingly.

The two civilians also got up from their places. One of them put on his glasses and read off from a piece of paper: "On the basis of articles of the laws (he read a list of them), the Extraordinary People's Court of the Third Reich condemns Johann Weiss, convicted of the illegal transportation of gold outside the borders of the Reich, to be executed for the crime committed." He added: "Note: Acting on irrefutable evidence, and in connection with the fact that the criminal could not be brought into the court from the prison hospital, where he is located, the sentence has been handed down by the court in his absence."

"But it seems to me that I am perfectly healthy."

"This no longer had any significance for you", said the man in civilian clothes as he put his glasses away in their case.

The investigator again addressed himself to Weiss:

"I have withdrawn the accusation against you for bearing false witness, inasmuch as it has been established that you really are called Weiss."

Weiss bowed and scraped his foot.

"Do you have something to say?" asked the investigator.

"Only a few words", said Weiss, grinning. "In Bern I left a letter addressed to Walter Schellenberg with one of our agents. In it I expressed the supposition that some trick like this might be tried on me and that danger threatened me from Herr Muller. The Abwehr agent Major Steinglitz had warned me about this."

"So what", said the man in civilian clothes, "it just means you'll have to follow Herr Steinglitz all the faster."

But Weiss noticed that while this statement was being made, all three "judges" exchanged glances surreptitiously.

No matter how much Johann attempted not to think about the execution, his consciousness would not obey him.

He could only force himself not to imagine the details, to cut them out.

He knew that he could be executed by the Germans as a Soviet spy. And he had thought out his entire behavior prior to death right down to the smallest detail. He was sure of himself

and knew that he would be able to preserve his dignity as a Soviet man and Chekist right up to the last minute. And this struggle to the last moment for his dignity was to absorb him completely, overshadowing the thought of death itself.

To be executed in the guise of Johann Weiss, however--no, he was not prepared for that.

The most terrible thing was that even in those hours before his death, he could not--did not have the right--to become himself. He was going to be executed by the Germans as a German.

The Gestapo men would be killing a German, a member of the German secret service, and that was all.

The absurdity of such a death tormented his soul and drove him to madness.

It was senseless to strain all his emotional strength and to prepare himself for death as if it were some summit. And it was also senseless to shriek, sob, and beg for mercy. He could do that as much as he wanted to. It would only be natural for Johann Weiss who had become the victim of the struggle between the two secret services, the pitiful victim of a squabble between the rulers of the Reich. And there was no need or point for Weiss to preserve his human dignity in the face of death.

But Aleksander Belov nevertheless decided to reject the logic of such thoughts. After all, Weiss, the Weiss he had become, still existed; and the present-day Weiss differed in many respects from the former one with whom he had started on his path. He had become a personality of sorts. And it was possible that someone or other would have taken this personality into account.

Belov, as he weighed all his chances of being saved, came to the conclusion that if Johann Weiss, living in a world of baseness, made a deal, that this would only be a meaningless postponement, bought at the price of his weakness. And it was precisely to this that Weiss was being pressured by the two people who came alternately to his cell to see him. The first, who was unctuously polite, and was evidently a lawyer by training, came once a week. He tried, patiently, logically, and persistently, to persuade Weiss to tell him everything he knew about the activities in Bern of the agents of Schellenberg's secret diplomacy. He promised him clemency in return for this. With this cultured and educated man, Weiss conducted himself arrogantly and threatened him with vengeance from Walter Schellenberg. The lawyer answered quietly and with conviction:

"Even if the person you mention were to find out about your present whereabouts, he would hardly show much interest in you, because he knows that the people here are capable of forcing a man to loosen his tongue. And in view of these circumstances, you no longer represent any value whatever."

"You mean that if you were to free me later, that person will do everything to take care of me for my long tongue?"

"There's no doubt about it", agreed the lawyer. "But a second person who is interested in your information, has at his disposal sufficient possibilities to export you, let's say, to Spain."

"So that Schellenberg's boys can take care of me there?"

"That will depend on your talents as a conspirator."

"But what's to prevent me from letting Schellenberg know from Spain what kind of trick you played on me?"

"That's pointless. Schellenberg will be shown your statements in good time. Why wouldn't he believe them?"

"And then he'll come to an agreement with your top man and they'll jointly decided to get rid of me."

"That won't happen immediately. And it will lengthen your life somewhat." The lawyer smiled and asked: "I hope you've noticed how frank I am with you? Extremely so, isn't that true?"

"I'll say!" said Weiss. "You couldn't have been any more frank."

The second man came to Weiss' cell only on Fridays, on the day when executions and beatings were done.

He was not very tall, with a thick neck, broad-shouldered, with a tight, protruding paunch, and an unmoving, deathly cold face.

When he walked into the cell, he first of all checked that the prisoner's hands were tied tightly enough. He then took off his jacket, folded it neatly on the stool, rolled up his sleeves, pulled on a pair of heavy leather gloves, and silently and expertly, so as not to cripple him fatally, beat Weiss for twenty minutes. He sat down, took a breath, and then did it all over again. Before leaving, he asked:

"Well?" And walked out, carelessly throwing out the words, "Till next Friday."

Weiss forced himself to talk with this man during the break between beatings. He did it as if he understood his professional obligations and considered that they ought not to be an obstacle to their contact.

Weiss decided on this because with each beating it was more and more difficult for him to build up his strength again to prepare for the next one.

He did not want to die from the blows. At the beginning, taking advantage of his experience during the sessions in the boxing section of "Dinamo", he tried to soften the blows, so as to weaken them, by flinching at the moment they were hit. But the short man saw through this cleverness and began to lean Weiss up against the wall as he hit him.

While the executioner was resting seated on the cot, the emaciated Weiss leaned with his back against the wall, afraid to leave it for fear of falling. Barely moving his battered lips, he told of cases of dogs' remarkable loyalty to their masters, and of their intelligence and astonishing skill in sensitively divining a man's state of mind. Once he had noticed a dog's collar and leash in the jacket pocket of his torturer and had decided to try to soften his cobblestone of a heart with talk about animals. But the other only listened silently and then got up with a sigh and once more began to work diligently on Weiss.

After three weeks of visits like this, the short man announced, after the session ended:

"Well, that's all." He extended his hand to Weiss and asked in a whisper, "Did you notice that I didn't damage any internal organs? And why? Actually, like you, I have the same weakness. I prefer dogs to all living creatures."

The procedure of the beatings ended with that, as well as the visits of the polite lawyer who, after his unsuccessful attempts to persuade Weiss to be candid, complained to him:

"As a psychologist, I understand you. You are so extensively informed about our general methodology, that the complex of confidence is completely atrophied within you and because of this, I'm deprived of the possibility of establishing contact with you."

Weiss was left in peace for a few days. Then, once, he was awakened, dressed in a shirt with a cut-off collar, had his hands tied behind his back, and was led out. First two people were executed. Then two more. And then, when Weiss and the man standing next to him, who was doubled up and appeared to have an injured backbone, lifted their heads so the hoods could be put on, they were led back to their cells.

Thereafter Weiss was taken to executions two other times. He returned alive to his cell, but had the feeling that he had already been executed three times.

After these three executions which had not taken place, but which he survived, Johann fell into a state of indifference about everything. And when he caught himself as this, he decided once again, out of disgust with himself, to become the most exemplary prisoner so as to overcome by his will to action the leaden weight of the death he had lived through.

Again everything in his cell shone, again Weiss busied himself with gymnastics, and walked half the day on miles-long trips during which he mentally reread his favorite books or played out chess studies in his mind.

Weiss kept track of the days by the number of pails of food that he received, for there in his cell there was neither day nor night. The hundred-watt bulb burned with strident fury and it seemed that it consumed his eyes with its burning light, like sulphuric acid. But after the visits to Weiss' cell by the two men had stopped, the hundred-watt lamp was replaced with a very weak one whose two filaments had a reddish glow. And it became dark in the cell, as in a pit, and cold, as in a pit. Evidently the powerful bulb had heated the air and, perhaps, its bright light had inhibited the insupersable feeling of chill which now tortured Johann unceasingly.

The death sentence continued to hang over him. But he trained himself not to think about that.

On every following day he set a task for himself. For example, to go on foot from Moscow to Bakovka and again return to Moscow, a distance of 46 kilometers--at first looking mentally to the right, and on the return trip, to the left.

He thought up the most complicated gymnastic exercises and mathematical problems.

At one time he wavered--why not give in? Tell everything he knew about Schellenberg's secret diplomacy and by doing so buy at least temporary freedom. But, after painstakingly weighing all

the pros and cons, he came to the conclusion that if they had not executed him up until now, it was only because they had not succeeded in getting any information out of him. And when he was empty, they would destroy him the way they destroy used packages for secret documents. Moreover, his steadfastness had obviously given the Gestapo men the idea that he was a more important figure in the political secret service than they had thought up to the present time.

And the most important thing was that Himmler stood above Schellenberg and Muller, and Schellenberg acted on orders from Himmler. And if Muller used information from Weiss against Schellenberg, Himmler would know about it. He would reconcile Schellenberg with Muller and both of them, after the reconciliation (and perhaps prior to it) would try to settle accounts with Weiss. Of course, he could escape from their vengeance by going under ground, into Zubov's group, for example, but that would mean ruining the career of Johann Weiss--and many Soviet intelligence agents would have to take fatal risks to get to Weiss' position. No, he had to fight for his life for the sake of preserving the life of Johann Weiss.

Even the prison guards became full of respect for this prisoner who was sentenced to death and who fought with such stubbornness against the physical and psychological destruction which, it seemed, was inevitable under conditions where every new day might be the last.

Weiss cell shone with cleanliness--Johann devoted himself to concern about it with unusual ardor.

He was a disciplined prisoner. He was cheerful, friendly, and at the same time never lost the sense of his own worth. Slowly Weiss succeeded in breaking down the two guards, old professional prison guards, in whom the prisoners aroused less curiosity than crows in cages.

They felt toward Weiss something like favor, as toward a model prisoner, and began doing small services for him. Weiss was given the opportunity to read books. In his absorbed and isolated reading he gained the emotional balance and the ability to observe himself as if from the outside. And when he had gained this ability, he was filled with confidence in himself and the calm certainty that he would not lose control of himself now under any circumstances.

At the end of July, the guards came suddenly for Johann. He thought, "They're taking me to be executed."

And he was surprised that he did not collapse or feel any shivers of horror, nor even the desire to think about something important in these final minutes.

It must have been that he was so tired of thinking about death that he had forgotten how to be afraid of it. But he was not taken to the place where executions were carried out, but to the next flight above where the general offices were.

As he walked along the corridor, he heard iron doors shut, someone's legs shuffling along the cement floor, the sound of the guards' iron heels.

A German army general went past him with his hands tied behind his back and his face beaten. The general's back seemed bent by the force with which he was pushed along from behind by the barrels of two SS men's sub-machine guns.

The common cell where Weiss unexpectedly found himself reminded him of an army caserne, there were so many officers there. But they looked like soldiers who had just surrendered to the enemy after being caught unawares.

The enemy had torn off their shoulder-boards and ripped off their insignia along with the cloth of their uniforms. Several of them had been beaten and two, with the marks of their wounds, lay on the floor.

In addition to the army men, there were also people there in civilian clothes. For some reason, one was wearing silk pajamas and fur house slippers.

The cots, in threes, one on top of the other like book-shelves, were all occupied by higher-ranking officers. The others sat or lay on the cement floor.

At a distance from all the others sat a man in civilian clothes leaning with his back against the wall. His bloodied head hung down helplessly on his chest--he was unconscious, but no one paid any attention to him.

Weiss poured some water into a metal pitcher, took the packet of paper lying on the cover of the sanitary pail, rolled up tightly-packed balls of it, put them on the floor, lit them, and heated the water in the pitcher over this tiny fire; he poured it on the wounded man's head and covered his wounds with the same paper. He then tore a long piece of cloth off his undershirt and bandaged his head.

Weiss noticed that the prisoners with attentively following his manipulations. When he had finished, he got up from the floor, looked at them all, and remarked drily:

"That's not the soldier's way, gentlemen, to refuse help to a wounded man."

"What is this, a lesson?" asked a tow-headed officer angrily.

"Yes", said Weiss, "a lesson." And he advised him, "Save your nerves--you'll still need them."

He went over to a cot where a grey-haired officer sat with his legs over the side. He was evidently the senior ranking officer there, since the others looked at him with a certain respect. He stood at attention in front of him and introduced himself:

"Oberleutenant Johann Weiss, sentenced to death by hanging."

"Already?". was all the officer asked.

And suddenly Weiss heard from the upper bunk the astonished voice of Hugo Lemberg:

"My God! You're alive?"

Weiss smiled at Hugo. The latter jumped down from the bunk and embraced him.

"I can't say I'm glad to see you here, but I'd be lying if I hid my purely egotistical pleasure at our meeting".

"You're bearing up great!"

"What else is left for me?"

"Do you know what happened?"

Weiss shook his head.

Hugo began whispering in his ear:

"Do you remember Colonel Stauffenberg, the one with one hand missing--you met him at my place?"

Weiss nodded.

"The colonel carried out an attempt on Hitler's life, but it failed. The bomb went off, but Hitler saved himself. They say he said a historic phrase at the time: 'Oh, my new pants-- and I just put them on yesterday!'"

Hugo's face twitched, his eyes shone, his pupils widened, and he laughed hysterically.

"Should I give you some water?" asked Weiss.

"No, don't need it." Hugo held onto Weiss and whispered to him, breathing heavily: "You can't imagine the full depths of the treachery and cowardice that opened up in this conspiracy against Hitler!" He said with desperation: "And I didn't manage to shoot myself, the way the others did. And now they'll hang me. Hang me, right?"

"And Stauffenberg?"

"They shot him along with some others in the courtyard by the light of car headlights. They were shot by the ones who immediately betrayed the cause when they found out that the Führer was alive. They shot them even before the SS-men got there so as to cover up their traces behind them, and now several of the ones who did the shooting are also here--there's one of them lying on the cot over there." He cried in a frenzy: "Everything's finished, Weiss, everything!" He was silent, and then said hoarsely: "Stauffenberg's last words before he was shot were, 'Long live eternal Germany!'." He asked hopefully: "But perhaps you noticed that my views differed from Stauffenberg's ideas? 'Long live the great German Reich!'--that's what I would have shouted if I'd been in his place."

"Evidently, you'll still have that opportunity", said Weiss discreetly. He understood that even in the face of death, Hugo Lemberg considered it necessary to emphasize the difference between his political stand and that of Stauffenberg.

Be that as it may, however, thanks to Hugo all the officers who were imprisoned there recognized in Weiss a man of their rank and were inspired with confidence in him. Johann assumed among them rather rapidly the position of being in charge, not only because of his extensive experience as a prisoner, but as a result of his ability to organize all sorts of people under all sorts of conditions.

He suggested that all the wounded and beaten men be given places on the cots. He made an exception for the grey-haired colonel, since he noticed that the only precedence given there was to aged people.

Inasmuch as he had won the reputation among the staff of being a "model prisoner" during his lengthy stay in the prison, he succeeded in talking the guards into giving him certain medications.

Several of the prisoners had managed to keep their wedding rings. Weiss advised them to use them to bribe the guards, so that they could send to some single address a general message to their families with a brief greeting from each, perhaps his last.

He even fixed the number of words, ten per man. A long message or several messages would be difficult for the guard to hide and take secretly out of the prison. Weiss made the ink, since he knew the chemical composition of the medicines they had gotten. He made a pen by flattening the broken pinclasp from a medal for the winter campaign of 1941-42 in Russia that was found on the uniform of one of the officers.

During the first week, nearly a third of the prisoners was taken out and executed immediately after the interrogation.

Weiss attempted with all his energies to alleviate the imprisoned officers' stay in the cell, although all of them did not evoke sympathy and far from all of them deserved concern.

The colonel, for example, had a high opinion of the fighting ability of the SS divisions and all he complained about was that the Führer had not expressed a desire to form such privileged units from among the personnel of the Wehrmacht. They would be able to fulfill the SS' functions not less successfully, as well as the functions of the Gestapo Sonderkommandos, by energetically clearing the occupied territories of surplus population and opponents of the victors' laws.

He was particularly indignant over Hitler's order of 22 December 1943 by which the "guardian officers" (then called political officers), which had existed in the units of the Wehrmacht since 1942, were separated from the system of military counter-intelligence organs (I-Z), and subordinated directly to the chiefs of staff, with their name changed to "National-Socialist Guidance Officers", abbreviated as NSFO. As a rule, Nazi party workers with no military experience and who had never been near the front were appointed as NSFO's. Bromann was in charge of choosing them and the NSFO's were in actuality subordinated to his party office.

? The colonel, wrinkling his low, stubborn forehead, declaimed angrily:

"I suppose that I deserve to be shot as an officer, but

not the scaffold like a common criminal, because I remain true to those goals which the Führer pursued. The leaders of the putsch listed proofs that Reichsführer Himmler was informed about our dissatisfaction with Hitler and that his attitude towards us was sympathetic. And that the most experienced generals, the ones capable of putting down any dissatisfaction in the masses with no less resoluteness than the SD, SS, and Gestapo, would go to make up the government of military dictatorship.

"Then the participants in the putsch were under Himmler's protection?" asked Weiss.

"Unfortunately, that can't be called anything more than indulgent connivance", sighed the colonel sadly. "But it seems to me", he said, shifting to a barely audible whisper, "that the Reichsführer was infuriated no so much by the fact that an attempt was made on the Führer's life, as he was by it's turning out to be a failure. And it wasn't by accident that he gave some of the leaders of the conspiracy the opportunity and the time to commit suicide, and ordered the others to be shot on the spot without interrogation."

"Do you explain that just by his desire to wipe out the witnesses of what you call his "indulgent connivance"?

"No", the colonel shook his head. "Not by that alone. Himmler is undoubtedly an intelligent and far-sighted man. Being informed about the development of the putsch's preparations, he obviously foresaw its full danger."

Weiss' face expressed surprise.

"I have in mind the tremendous danger which threatened the Reich if the event the attempt had succeeded. This would have touched off activities by the broad classes of our country's population which oppose Fascism, and the Reds, coming out from the underground, would be able to lead them. In this way, we could become, without wanting to, responsible for a revolutionary uprising--and for that, we should not have been hung, but torn to pieces, drowned in filth, and had our names eternally damned." The colonel declared passionately: "And when I realized this fully, I was convinced that I deserved to be executed, and I'm ready for it!"

"Well", grinned Weiss, "you're a brave man if you're ready to meet death with such firmness."

"But we turned out to be fools", exclaimed the colonel sorrowfully, "because we took into the conspiracy the younger officers who think differently than we, the older generation,

doi Stauffenberg, the most active individual in organizing the putsch, proved to be particularly dangerous. Unfortunately, we learned too late how harmful a figure he was. Stauffenberg began to insist on a coalition not only with various oppositional groups, but even with the left Socialists, and--imagine the arrogance--with the Communist underground. And that's not all: he proposed to enter into negotiations with Russia!

"But he gained such confidence and authority among the young officers that it was hard for us to fight him. Besides that, he's a man of astonishing bravery and steadfastness of spirit and proved to be the only one of all of us capable of a terrorist act--there wasn't any other."

"Then you were forced to defer to him in certain things."

"Of course! For instance, Stauffenberg was to meet with the leaders of the Communist underground on July 4th. And we couldn't even dispute this monstrous decision of his."

"And the meeting took place?"

"No", said the colonel, "it seems that one of our people wisely told Himmler about the presence within our conspiracy of a dangerous tendency, represented by the left Socialists who were ready to form a bloc with the Communists, and also about the day of Stauffenberg's proposed meeting with the leaders of the Communist underground. I don't know why, but on the appointed day Stauffenberg couldn't come to this meeting, and on the next day, the Gestapo carried out a raid and the Communists were captured.

When I talked with Stauffenberg after this, he distorted our aim with even more violent determination and expressed the intention of bringing the plot to the level of a broad democratic movement. And he had already done a good deal in that direction. "Yes", repeated the colonel thoughtfully, "Stauffenberg was an ominous figure, and the more I think about him, the more I repent my error."

But quickly the colonel declared firmly:

"Without doubt, in the event Stauffenberg had carried out the action successfully, we older officers would have taken all measures to instill in the masses the greatest grief and regret over the criminal murder of the Führer. And as the inheritors of his greatness, we would, in the name of the Reich, have had his murderer executed in dishonor. The people must know that anyone who raises his hand against the head of the Reich or his associates is the greatest of criminals."

"Clever!" said Weiss. "So it turns out that Stauffenberg was menaced by death not only during the attempt against Hitler, but also at the hands of those who headed up the plot?"

The colonel nodded grandly in a gesture of agreement:

"Otherwise all of us would have been counted, in the eyes of history, among those scoundrels who have made attempts on the lives of monarchs at various times."

"Are you a monarchist?"

"No, that form of government is out-moded. Only a government of military dictatorship has the right to the fullness of unlimited power. In the contemporary world, it is the sole form of power capable of holding the people in submission and solving all the problems both within the country and outside of it by the means of military force."

"You have a strong concept", remarked Weiss. "But how could you move against the Führer when you basically shared his aims?"

"The Führer should have sacrificed his life himself", said the colonel somberly, "in order that we might realize his ideals with greater freedom. He focused these ideals too much on his own personality. In order to gain their realization, we should have sacrificed the Führer. Once we had sacrificed him, we would have been able, united, to fight for his ideals in contact with the Western powers. I've put my thoughts down on paper--it is something like a political testament. And I think that you ought to

do everything possible so that my testament, instead of the sentimental message to families, will get to the people it is intended for. Do you understand the full importance of such a document? Actually, this isn't even a request, it's an order."

Weiss objected:

"Only if the majority of the prisoners agrees not to send the letter to their parents and to replace it with your so-called testament."

"But they'll never agree!" exclaimed the colonel angrily. "The bunch here is too varied--there are even those among them who support Stauffenberg's views."

"Well you try to acquaint them with your document", Weiss advised him. "These people are also part of the Germany whose fate you are so worried about."

"I'll probably do that", said the colonel with a little uncertainty in his voice. But then, after a long pause, he declared, "No, there are too many undesirable individuals here." From under the mattress he took the sheets of paper folded to make a notebook and asked him, "Take it...maybe you'll somehow find a way to safeguard this document and pass it on to someone."

"I can't guarantee to you", said Weiss, "that it'll land in the hands of the addressees that you are counting on."

"What's the difference", the colonel agreed. "Let it be whoever it turns out to be." Mocking himself, he said, "Obviously, I'm just agreeing to that out of vanity. But let it stand."

They worked the colonel over thoroughly on the very first interrogation. He was dragged into the cell and thrown, half-dead, on the floor.

Weiss, who had already had considerable experience, gave him first aid.

When he came to, the colonel said to Weiss:

"I spelled out to them everything that I told you, and I look..." He wanted to lift his hand to his face, but he was too weak.

"Didn't they believe you?" asked Weiss.

"I guess they did", said the colonel. "But they insisted that I give them information about the generals who took part in

the plot. I refused--this violates my concepts of honor."

"And you didn't say anything about the younger officers either?" asked Weiss.

"As a senior officer, I have the right to evaluate them from all points of view", answered the colonel vaguely.

The colonel was led out to be executed the next day. He valiantly refused the shot of schnaps that was his due, as well as the tablets of opium that the guards tried to peddle.

Before going out, he went up to each officer, shook his hand, and hoped that he would meet death with the same presence of mind as he, the colonel, was doing.

He declined to take leave of the civilian prisoners. He walked out, stepping firmly, and did not even look back at the door.

Hugo Lemberg told Weiss that the central group of plotters had been opposed to killing Hitler up until the end of 1943. They feared that this would unleash an anti-Fascist struggle by the broad masses. The conspirators aimed only at getting the Führer to retire so as to give the overthrow to appearance of a legal change in the Reich's head. Moreover, Dulles had recommended to the conspirators who were in contact with him that they not undertake any action until the allies' army had landed in Europe.

The attempt on Hitler's life was to coincide with the allies' landing. The new government of Germany would withdraw its troops from the western front. The allies' army, once it had occupied Germany, would itself crush the possibility of a revolutionary anti-Fascist uprising. In this way, the Wehrmacht's troops would be free for a counter-attack against the advancing Soviet Army. All its forces would be thrown into that.

"But the colonel, for instance", said Hugo with a grin, "was opposed to Germany's surrendering to the United States and England. In his opinion, this could be taken as a general military defeat of Germany. He was also against the occupation of the country by Anglo-American troops--he felt that the German army itself should crush the anti-Fascist forces, and thus instill in the popular masses the appropriate respect for the new German government. The naivete of a martinet!" concluded Hugo with a grin.

"Do you think so?" doubted Weiss.

"No question about it. The fact is that we military men should have relied on Germany's most influential forces right from the beginning--then our Putsch would have had all the necessary guarantees."

"What forces do you mean?"

"The industrial circles of the Reich", said Hugo. But unfortunately many in that sphere were against Hitler's replacement. They remembered very well how decisively he had taken care of the Communist movement at one time. And with what daring and logic he had carried out the complete subordination of the nation's forces to the economic interests of the magnates of industry. Besides", Hugo lowered his voice, "it seems to me that the news got to Himmler that several of our generals were wavering on whether or not to recognize him as the Reich's new Führer. But they were aware that that candidature had the resolute support of the ruling circles of the U.S. and England. And I imagine that if the attempt on Hitler's life had gone off successfully, Himmler would have immediately struck out at the majority of the participants in the plot with the power of the punishing forces of the SS and the Gestapo."

"So, the plot was hopeless?"

"No, why?" objected Hugo sullenly. "If, as Stauffenberg had planned, we had united with the broad democratic front, it's possible that everything would have been different. But I am not for that kind of Germany--I'm an enemy of such a Germany."

"And which Germany would the German people prefer?"

Hugo shrugged his shoulders.

"The people are only a reliable foundation for the edification of a government when they have been firmly shoved into place by a strong power." With a broad gesture at the bunks the prisoners were lying on, Hugo declared with a malicious grin, "If a Russian Communist were suddenly to appear here, I can just picture how he'd gloat."

"But why?" asked Weiss.

"Because", answered Hugo, "the Russians need Hitler as a despised symbol of Germany itself, as a target. And we couldn't take that target away from them..."

"You're naive!" said Weiss. "You wanted to replace Führer Hitler with Führer Himmler, but the Soviet Army's target

is German Fascism. You yourself know that very well from the intercepts of the Soviet government's declarations."

"Yes, I suppose so", agreed Hugo disconsolately. "As a matter of fact, what we were most afraid of was not that SS units loyal to Hitler might wipe us out, but that the murder of Hitler would be taken as a signal for an anti-Fascist uprising. And we also feared that Soviet troops would hand our army a decisive defeat before the American and English troops began to advance across our territory." And abruptly, as if only now enlightened by a thought that suddenly came to him, Hugo asked animatedly, "But why are you criticizing what I have to say?"

"It's not a matter of indifference to me what they're planning to execute you for here", said Weiss.

"You know, now I don't give a damn whether they execute me as a supporter of Stauffenberg's views, or as an opponent of his errors. One thing counts--death makes everything and everything and everybody equal". Hugo added with a grin: "Every living man thinks in his own way, but all dead men have the same stench. Too bad I can't propose to you to test that here in practice--it looks, evidently, as if they'll be hanging you soon too."

"Yes", said Weiss, and touched his neck with his finger. "Very kind of you to remind me of that."

"Excuse my petty vengeance, but it seemed to me that you were somehow playing down the significance of our conspiracy..."

Two young officers, Jurgens and Breker, who had come back after a brief, cursory interrogation, after which they were told that they would be sentenced to death, were in a state of profound despair. They were not horrified by the nearness of death--their attitude to the news of it was one of dignified bravery. They had understood during the course of the interrogation that there had been informers among the generals who had headed the conspiracy. These traitors had given the Gestapo the names of the participants and informed them of many details about the plot. And other generals, on the day of the 20th of July which had been fixed for the murder of Hitler, showed cowardice and indecisiveness. They failed to take action and left everything up to Stauffenberg. When they found out that Hitler was still alive after the bomb explosion, these generals merely awaited retribution calmly and did not undertake anything to give their younger co-conspirators a chance to save themselves.

Weiss spent the whole night with these young officers.

Jurgens said fiercely that now he understood: many generals who had been stripped of their posts for the defeat on the eastern front had joined the plot only out of a feeling of revenge, so that they could later shove their military failures off on Hitler.

Breker recounted that Stauffenberg, like those who shared his opinions, considered that the first thing to be achieved was the surrender of the Wehrmacht's armies on the eastern front. But now, the young officer repeated in desperation, now that the plot had failed, the most terrible thing was not that many of its participants had been executed, and still others were going to be executed. What was their death compared to the fact that they had not succeeded to averting the deaths of hundreds of thousands of German soldiers on the eastern front?

Jurgens sadly answered all these complaints:

"But you and I knew that the leaders of the plot had unanimously agreed to capitulate to the U. S. and England in order to continue the war against Russia."

"Yes, but we were for Stauffenberg", Breker answered him, "and even the Communists considered it possible to enter into negotiations with him."

"And where are they now? Also executed?..."

Two days later, Weiss was suddenly called into the prison office and informed that he was free.

At the prison gates Gustav was waiting for him in a car. Slapping Weiss on the back, he said approvingly:

"Well, you turned out to be a gentleman who could take it."

Gustav, without stopping off on Bismarckstrasse, drove him to Schellenberg's headquarters.

Schellenberg, who was even thinner and yellower, met Weiss without a smile. He shook hands with him and said:

"I have been fully informed about your behavior." He wrinkled up his face painfully, rubbed his left cheek, and asked him: "Do you have any requests?"

"I am ready to continue my service...and you may rest assured that...", Weiss began.

"That's not what I had in mind", Schellenberg interrupted him impatiently.

"I request you, in that case, to order the release of the imprisoned Wehrmacht officers Breker and Jurgens."

"Do you have any proofs of their innocence?"

"They didn't betray any of the participants in the plot. That's the best evidence that they can be useful."

"For what purpose?"

"I suppose that you appreciate their ability to keep their mouths shut even under the threat of death."

"I have already come to appreciate this ability in you", Schellenberg smiled with one side of his face.

"Thank you", said Weiss. "Then I may definitely count on...?"

Schellenberg interrupted him again.

"I had intended to address a request to the Reichsführer that you be awarded the Iron Cross, First Class. Do you prefer that I trouble him about something else?"

"Permit me to reiterate my request."

"All right." Schellenberg took some piece of paper from his desk, slowly tore it up, and threw it in the wastebasket. "You may leave."

But at the door he stopped him:

"Do you think that they'll be useful for the secret service?"

"No", said Weiss.

"Then for what?"

"When the Reichsführer pardons them, Herr Müller will try to find out if they weren't the Reichsführer's agents." Weiss grinned. "Müller will take a defeat that will be disagreeable for him. It will become known that he's undertaken the investigation and this will serve as new proof of his hostile attitude toward Himmler."

Schellenberg looked questioningly and silently into Weiss' eyes and then smiled suddenly.

"That sounds clever. Now I get it. You're preparing a little revenge on Muller for you stay in prison?"

"You are perceptive, my Brigadenfuhrer", said Weiss. "Then I may be certain...?"

"Just as sure as you are", pursued Schellenberg, "that I'm now going to order that a new request to the Reichsfuhrer be prepared for your award."

On the way to Bismarckstrasse, Gustav managed to tell Weiss that criminal investigators working for Schellenberg had uncovered, with some difficulty, the whole machination against him. The death of the unknown man had taken place not at the time of the automobile wreck, but after he had been poisoned a long time before the wreck.

They then succeeded in finding out through agents that Weiss was in prison. But Walter Schellenberg ordered that no immediate steps be taken for Weiss' liberation, for his stay there was the most serious sort of testing and a better arrangement for checking up on him could hardly be conceived. Then, busy with a host of problems, the Brigadenfuhrer evidently forgot about Weiss and no one dared to remind him about him. And only when Schellenberg by chance saw Weiss' name in a list signed by Himmler of persons condemned to death did he take the appropriate measures.

"But it's possible", added Gustav, "that neither Himmler nor Schellenberg wanted to get into a quarrel with Muller at that complicated time. But after Himmler had taken care of the members of the conspiracy, and, most important, of those of them who had been in contact with him, the opportunity presented itself to get you away from Muller."

"But they could have hung me on any day after the sentence", remarked Johann.

"That wasn't excluded", agreed Gustav. "It's possible they'd have rehabilitated you posthumously. But you know, to bury you twice--that would really have been too much." He advised him, "By the way, don't forget to take a drive over to the cemetery--you'll see an excellent headstone: 'To the unforgotten Johann Weiss.' In any event, it wouldn't have been necessary to order a new one."

When Johann walked into his room and glanced in the mirror, he involuntarily looked around. From the mirror there looked out at him a bony, harsh face with deeply sunken temples, cheeks, and eyes; his hair looked lifeless and had turned grey. His neck was thin and it seemed his lips had dried up over his teeth.

"Ye-e-s", he said with disgust, "a typical case of dystrophy." He said threateningly to the mirror, "It's just slander on mankind, isn't it?"

He slept nearly around the clock.

Berlin shook from the uninterrupted bombings.

63

On the next day, after the air raid all-clear had sounded, Weiss visited Professor Stutthof's massage salon.

Stutthof welcomed him with joking words, but without a smile:

"Ah, welcome to the deceased!" He sat down and placed his hands spread out on the table. "Well, tell me about it."

Weiss told him about those details of the conspiracy about which he had learned.

Having become accustomed in prison to emaciated and sorrowful faces, he did not pay any attention to that fact that the professor's face too now showed hidden suffering.

After he had listened to Weiss' account, the professor was silent for a moment and then remarked, as if reluctantly:

"Actually, we've managed to get a delay of execution for you."

"How's that?"

"We found a man who notified Prince Hohenlohe that the officer who had been presented to him for orders had been taken by Muller. He went to the Fuhrer with a protest. While it was being established that it was all a misunderstanding, the name of Johann Weiss found its way into the papers of the Reichskanzlei. So, Muller hesitated and didn't make up his mind to hang you." He asked him, "Have you seen Heinrich? He's full of initiative,

but at the same time, a careful comrade. He really suffered through your death, he really did. Do go see him today."

And only now did Weiss notice that the professor's face had lost the ability to smile.

"Excuse me, but it looks to me as if you were troubled by something?" Weiss asked sympathetically.

"Of course not", the professor frowned painfully, "what sort of troubles could I have!" Just the usual sorrow." Then he told him in a sort of wooden voice, "Well, I had to find out about a set of secret blueprints. My wife figured it out correctly--with the bombing and the fire, that was the most appropriate time for it, but she was delayed for some reason--first the stair-well collapsed, and then the wall fell in. Now, you know, they're bombing every day, so please keep that in mind." He stood up and extended his hand. "Yes, I almost forgot. Your Aleksander Zubov is in Berlin."

"And how are you now?" asked Weiss compassionately.

"I'm studying", the doctor answered. "I'm studying how to digest my sorrow." He glanced at the ceiling in an obvious effort to avoid meeting Weiss' eyes, and said: "Zubov commands the prisoners of war whom they send out of the camps to go over the ruins after the bombings, but they also work during the bombings--they save Germans buried in bomb shelters."

Then his face lightened slightly and he went on:

"That individual is absolutely no use at all for operations which require a refined precision of the mind. He's a typical fighter. You know, at the time of the up-rising he got into the Warsaw ghetto and they say he combined in himself both David and Goliath. He dragged a heavy machine-gun on his back, moved from one firing position to another on the roofs, and shot the Fascists down as if they were targets on a firing range. Two of the men in the fighting group dragged him home barely alive. And just imagine, that Brigitte of his got an assignment for him to work in Berlin through her contacts. She's a strange person--she was introduced to me by chance in a home where I massage one of the leading bosses of the Reich. She immediately grabbed hold of me and begged me to treat her husband. I barely got away from her."

"But why", asked Weiss wonderingly, "Zubov is a remarkable fellow."

"That's possible", said the doctor angrily, "but I prefer to keep myself as far away as possible from activists like him. The ones who like to hang by a hair are the most difficult one to train." He remarked with a grin, "It appears that you also showed tendencies at one time toward operations of the sort?" And suddenly his face grew pale and the professor placed his hand over his heart. "Go, go", he gestured with his hand, "this will pass quickly... And he cried out angrily, since Weiss had not moved from the spot, "I told you, get out!"

Heinrich met Johann enthusiastically.

"I thought about you all the time. And did you remember me?" He squeezed Weiss' hand. "It's so nice that you're alive!"

Johann smiled in embarrassment and murmured:

"Yes, it's really not bad.* And, wanting to be absolutely truthful, he confessed: "Of course I remembered you, Heinrich. I was mainly worried that you would make somckind of mistake. I cursed myself for the fact that I hadn't tested you on all our techniques. This was my omission."

"That sounds familiar," said Heinrich.

"What?"

"You."

"Pardon me," Weiss said in embarrassment, "but it's true. The thought bothered me."

"So one can start to report right away with the very first words?" inquired Heinrich ironically.

Johann, forcing himself, mumbled:

"No, what for? There's still time..."

"You just don't know how to be a sham," laughed Heinrich, "and don't know to hide your feelings."

"And why, really, do I have to hide them from you?" asked Weiss, shrugging his shoulders. "I'm actually impatient to find out what happened to you there."

"Well, now!" exclaimed Heinrich, exultantly. "In this question of yours I heard what I wanted. Well, tell me, was Stutgoff satisfied with me?"

Weiss nodded.

"And you know that his wife, as a matter of fact, worked for the English?"

Weiss' face grew long.

"And extremely effectively," continued Heinrich. "The fact is that the radio navigational instruments manufactured at the secret shop

where she worked were intended for "Fau." Something wrong happened in this shop. The majority of the missiles for some reason didn't reach the target and fell into the sea. The fact was that in the special oils used for lubricating the mechanisms were minute particles of a volatile substance. It evaporated especially fast during the period of a missile's flight, the oil hardened and the flight trajectory was changed."

"And who found out about it?"

"I found it out," announced Heinrich proudly. "My uncle included me, as a person with an engineering education, in the technical group of the Gestapo, which was assigned to conduct the inquiry into this matter."

"And then what happened?"

"Nothing," said Heinrich. "After I discovered this funny business with the lubricating oils, I persuaded the Gestapo commission that the defect in the missiles consisted of some errors connected with a miscalculation of the force of gravity of a water surface. I had to work quite a lot on problems of ballistics. My arguments seem to have been extremely convincing. Through the professor I got word to his wife to carry out the lubrication of the navigational mechanisms in the future only after they had been passed by the technical representatives of the Air Force. And only then."

Weiss said:

"You know that Stutgoff's wife died."

Heinrich sighed.

"I know. It's terrible. You see, a new design of a flying missile was developed. She, apparently, wanted to learn in what way it was different from the earlier one..."

"In what way?" asked Weiss.

Heinrich said:

"It's too bad, but when a more authoritative commission learned about my conclusion, it was considered naive and hopeless. And I was shoved aside with comparative ease. I was deprived of the right to take part in similar technical experiments. I am occupied mainly in helping my uncle. He has been charged with duties of a manager of SS affairs. They are purely financial and management activities." He complained: "When I was certain that you had been killed, do you think that it was easy for me to sit with him nights in his office and

work on this confounded red tape? And he, as if in spite, is filled with the specially tender feelings of a relative toward me; now he embraces me and then he puts a hand on my shoulder, asking solicitously: "My boy, why don't you pour yourself a cup of coffee?" When I feel the hand of my father's murderer on my shoulder, I shake from hate and loathing. It has demanded an incredible effort from me to keep myself calm. That's how much I have wanted to put a bullet into his head!"

"What has held you back?"

"The professor. I didn't know he existed and simply took to the letter drop that which seemed to me to be of interest. And then I started to think -- when you were with me, you believed in me. And when I thought you were dead, there was no one of your people who would have wanted to believe in me. I decided that I was being used -- being used, not trusting me. These doubts were very agonizing. Then, instead of information, I put into the letter drop a letter, addressed to whom it may concern, in which I presented my feelings and doubts. And the doctor set up a meeting for me.

He told me that by so doing I had violated the rules of secrecy, but as a human being he understood me and therefore could not help but to respond to my letter." Heinrich smiled thoughtfully. "And, everything considered, it was strange and even somehow funny. When I thought that you were dead and I found myself alone, I felt unhappy and somehow abandoned, but by no means free. You were no more, but I nevertheless had to fulfill my duty to you."

"Not to me, but to yourself -- that's the important thing. Indeed, essentially, it is really now that you are completely free, inwardly free of the power of those, whom you yourself consider the shame of Germany. Is this actually not the real freedom?"

"Yes, you're right, but it isn't easy. I'm a German -- and I am against the Germans..."

"Listen," said Weiss. "My father was a soldier in the First World War, had the Georgian Crosses of all classes, well, on the order of your Iron Crosses, and was a judge on a drum-head court martial on what caused a soldier to turn his weapon against the Tsar. You're not a traitor, no. You are an enemy of the enemies of Germany, the Nazi clique. Listen, I'll tell you something... There, in the prison, I became acquainted with several participants in the plot against the Fuehrer. One of them wanted Hitler killed only to have the odious personality removed which symbolized Nazism. He was to be replaced by a person not so compromised before the world public, who then in alliance with the USA and England would manage to continue that which Hitler had not managed to do... And others," said Weiss with agitation, "hoped that the murder of Hitler would serve as the signal for the

revolt of the anti-Nazi forces, that the Soviet would not permit this uprising to be put down and the German people would be given a chance to elect a people's government." He went on sorrowfully. "I somehow was able to meet with Colonel Stauffenberg -- the same man who made the attempt on Hitler's life. And then when he talked with me, he tried hard to worm out of me, as an Abwehr man, some kind of information about underground organizations of Germans and prisoners of war. It must be that he was seeking contacts with them and, possibly, with the Soviet command." Weiss spread his hands and said sadly: "Then, when I learned in prison what kind of man this was, strong-willed and of high patriotic aspirations, it was distressing for me to think that I was not able to help him in any way."

"Well, tell me about yourself," requested Heinrich. Let me know the priceless impressions of a prisoner. When you were sentenced to death, what did you think about?"

"The most difficult was not to think about death, or more truthfully about the absurdity of such a death. Imagine what it is to fall victim to the enmity between two Nazi services. Before execution a man, if he is a real man, struggles with himself and gathers together all his strength in order to die with dignity. He is wholly involved with this thought and his soul is free of other emotions. And what was I able to do? Why did I have to demonstrate to the Gestapo how steadfast a Nazi German officer could be facing execution. The devil this was necessary to me! And therefore death seemed to me to be especially mean and horrible, and I was not simply frightened, but my whole being was literally quaking."

"But how were you able to hold out under this torture?"

"I don't know myself how." And Weiss said shakily: "Perhaps I held out because I wanted very much to live and lived in the prison like a real prisoner. And what else was left?"

"Did thoughts about suicide come to you?"

"Well, what do you think!" said Weiss indignantly. "When I fell sick there, I was terribly afraid that I would die."

"But it was really better than the noose?"

"In the sense of painful and mental sensations, it's possible," agreed Johann. "But, you understand, if you hold up, you then don't stop to believe that you'll live." He scowled in annoyance. "And in general, you know, I've had enough. Let's talk about something else."

"Pardon me," said Heinrich thoughtfully, "I had to know this in case the same thing also happens to me." Suddenly he screwed up

his eyes mockingly. "By the way, let me tell you something pleasant. Charlotte goes to the cemetery every Sunday and lays flowers on your grave."

Weiss became embarrassed and said hurriedly:

"Well, you explain to her that it was -- a misunderstanding."

"No, be kind to me, do it yourself. Such assignments, addressed to a young lady, are not included in my duties."

At that moment there was a knock on the door and on the threshold appeared Willi Schwarzkopf. On his face was such a false amazement at the sight of a resurrected Weiss, that he understood: Willi had been wonderfully informed from the very beginning about all of his misadventures. And it was no accident that the elder Schwarzkopf had considered it necessary to remark to Weiss that legends abounded about Willi's devotion to Walter Shellenberg.

"You with your 'exploit,' Herr Weiss, have done the devil knows what. Now the Reichsfuehrer will want everyone's devotion to him tested -- including up to the gallows!" He laughed loudly and announced:

"You're a ball-of-fire, Johann, that's what you are. You knew how to gain favor and rise over all of us. That's no good and indiscreet. You'll go far now if you don't stumble," he warned in a friendly and confidential manner. "Take care, your success is envied, and many of them don't so much want to stretch out a hand to you as to put out a foot to trip you up." And he closed: "But I was always especially well desposed toward you. I hope that you'll remember it."

After hearing such words from the lips of a highly-placed SS officer, Weiss came to the conclusion that his stay in prison would bring him many advantages in the future. And, at the same time, Willi's warning put him on the alert -- apparently this success was not without its dangers by far.

Willi went out in order to make arrangements for supper.

Heinrich in silence turned around on the table the map on which the situation on the front was marked.

Johann bent over the map. And that which he saw filled his whole being to overflowing with such a joy that he was forced to confess to Heinrich.

"You know, the most dangerous thing for an intelligence man -- well, is such a feeling of happiness that it's impossible to cope with it."

"Tell me, please, he who is on a familiar basis with death itself, he is one, you see, who has capitulated -- he falls into panic from happiness."

"Obviously, my nervous system got a little bit frayed in prison," said Weiss, trying to find an excuse. "Excuse me, I'll be leaving. It's right, I don't have the inclination to show worry on my face when your uncle starts talking about the tragic situation on the front."

"Good," agreed Heinrich, "I'll say that you got a headache. A headache after imprisonment -- this is wholly believable."

It cost Weiss a great effort of will to suppress in himself a desire to make inquiries about the progress of the battles on the Eastern Front. These questions would require too great a spiritual load. To take upon himself a period of pretence, to carry on each time an inner struggle with himself and to express feelings opposite to those that flowed over in his heart, such tensions would right now be unthinkable for him. He had to conserve his spiritual resources.

He had prudently worked out for himself a style of conduct appropriate to an efficient, successful employee of the SD, who was wholly dedicated to his profession and proud of the fact that he was privy to its secrets. As concerned the Wehrmacht -- this was not his department. Therefore, when his co-workers discussed in his presence the victories or defeats of the German Army, Weiss maintained an imperturbable, reserved front, for once and all letting everyone know that his feelings were narrowly patriotic and strictly limited to intelligence affairs. He did not want to squander his mental energy on the discussion of problems not having a direct bearing on his duty job.

This declaration, being the basis of his conduct, not only... protected Weiss against the necessity of assuming still another guise over that which he had taken on, but also commanded respect for him as a person of strict rules and one who had placed before himself a solid and clear aim -- to occupy a high position within the SD system. And not because of some kind of contacts there, intrigues and backbiting, but only as a result of his own capabilities to fulfill with honor that which the requirements of the service prescribed.

But no matter how hard Weiss tried to teach himself to maintain his composure after finding out about the entry of the Soviet Army into German territory, he experienced such a feeling of happiness (he had not experienced anything similar even when he was released from prison) that it seemed to him that he would not be capable of hiding it. Another instant -- and the hated cover would fall off of itself and everyone would see the exultant face of Aleksandr Belov.

This danger had to be overcome and he had ruthlessly to deal with the happiness which could so powerfully take possession of his whole being that it could turn out to be fatal.

That is why Weiss had left Heinrich.

He went out to wander about the town.

In recent days Berlin had been subjected to especially fierce bombing attacks.

There were blocks of buildings with dim and darkened windows. In damp cellars cold as burial vaults lay people side by side, driven into the earth by the regular bombing. Whole regions had been converted into ruins. There stood flat, dark silhouettes of arched stone walls looking like ancient ruins.

It stank foully of dead ashes and broken bricks, the eyes pinched together from the smoke of burnt explosives and brick dust hung in the air like sand clouds in the desert, raised by a not too long gone sand storm.

There were many completely dead streets, along both sides of which jutted out the destroyed teeth of buildings and cliffs of brick. But the roadways had been freed of debris and even swept up. The residents of all Berlin had been turned out for the cleaning up. They swarmed here with their baby buggies and wheel-barrows, piling rocks and chunks of wood into them.

Representatives of the Nazi Party -- from every house still standing, block and street -- had been appointed supervisors over these people. They wore special armbands and, imitating the Gestapo, reveled in the power over their subservient compatriots.

It was enough for one of such Nazis to catch a resident of a house, block or street under his supervision in not appearing for work that a report accusing a citizen of the Third Reich of sabotage arrived in the regional office of the Gestapo. Evasion of labor conscription was equated with treason against the Reich. That is why Berlin, while being subjected to bombing attacks in the intervals between them, nevertheless looked "presentable." Hundreds of thousands of Berliners, like oppressed slaves, from morning till night cleaned up its graveyard-like streets until they took on the appearance of ancient, though orderly excavations with thoroughly cleaned roads. The masters of the German people were able to move freely in the cars about the city, over which a net of terroristic violence had been spread. Not one German was able to evade it.

All this was done not so much as to do the impossible -- to clean

Berlin of the ruins, as to cleanse the nation of suspicious elements, to hold the people in obedience, to expose grumbliers and to eliminate them.

Hitler was shown photographs of cleaned-up ruins as comforting evidence of the high patriotism of the Germans and their unshakable belief in victory.

But Bormann also brought other photographs to the Fuehrer -- of Germans who had dared to doubt in the victory of German weapons and had been hung on lamp posts.

And these, the other pictures, could have served as portraits of Berlin in the spring of 1945.

Goebbel's in his innumerable speeches explained to the Berliners how they must understand that process of transformation which was taking place in the structure of German society in connection with the bombings. The greatest material losses would be incurred by the propertied classes of the population and in this way, all by itself, material inequalities were being eliminated and at the same time the foundations of a democratic society were being laid, he prophesied. On the ruins were plastered announcements such as "The firm guarantees the construction of a new house after the war, if a fourth of its cost is invested right now." And here and there on a billboard was the slogan "We greet the first builder of Germany -- Adolf Hitler!"

Weiss stopped in front of such announcements and slogans and read them in the dim light of the moon. They were as blasphemous as a smile on the face of a corpse.

He stood and watched for a long time as on one of the streets which had been changed into a pile of rubble the residents who had survived the bombing cleaned the roadway of debris at the same time that their relatives lay buried in the cellars.

And those of them who tried surreptitiously to shovel a passage into a ruin in the hope of saving their close ones or only of pulling out their bodies, the supervisors drove them back to the road with curses. If the road was not cleaned up by morning, the ones guilty of sabotage were threatened with a trip to the regional office of the Gestapo.

It was an hour of quiet. Weiss saw long lines of Berliners near the water fountains. At the businesses for funeral supplies they were unloading coffins which were being stacked into piles rising almost to the roof of the building, -- an article which was selling like hotcakes right now.

In the squares and parks old men carefully swept up with brooms the dusty foliage of trees and bunches of lilac -- formerly they had been washed away with fire-engine hoses.

The homeless were sleeping on benches or simply on suitcases.

In the pale dusk, the faces of the people seemed to be grey as if sprinkled with ashes.

The walls of the buildings still standing were entirely plastered with bright placards and the streets had been made up like rich deadmen who are prettified on their deathbed for the consolation of relatives.

Then the city began anew to shudder from the shocks of bombs.

Nazi Germany counted on the Blitzkrieg in its strategy of war and all its military means were offensive weapons. The possibility of war on German soil itself was completely excluded from the system of planning. There was no sense in increasing the output of antiaircraft guns which for every two thousand rounds produce only one hit. This was too high a price to pay for the protection of the German population.

When squadrons of bombers appeared in the sky, Weiss without special trouble determined how meager the defensive fire of the Berlin antiaircraft defense was, -- he was accustomed to wretched fireworks.

Squadrons of heavy bombers unloaded over Berlin in an organized and deliberate manner, dumping their cargoes with understandable carelessness only in those places where the tracks of the tracers of antiaircraft shells was scarcely noticeable. They dropped their bombs over thickly populated working sections.

They hit against working Berlin, making the work of the Gestapo easier. Why should they look for anti-Nazis here? The dead, under the ruins, were no trouble to anyone and did not even have to be buried.

Looking at the glow of the sites of fires and at the outlying worker districts shrouded in a mournful haze and feeling the convulsive convolutions of the city shuddering from the bomb jolts, Weiss thought with confusion and bitterness about the fact that in the war against Nazism there also existed something more ominous and alien to the aims of the anti-Nazi coalition.

The plant complexes belonging to concerns were as if in a zone of inaccessibility and as though they were protected by a law of inviolability of private property, -- people perished.

The city appeared to be dead and abandoned. In the cellars,

the old people, women and children lay as if in a morgue.

The flights of bombers continued to unload over Berlin efficiently.

The sky seemed to be a slab of rock perforated by airplane motors. From it, heavy chunks, hollowly rending the air, were broken off and fell on the city. Tracer shells and searchlights only lighted the way for their fall.

The shock wave broke window panes in the upper stories of buildings and they showered down like slivers of ice.

The penetrating sound of airplane motors neared. Close after them slipped the blue rays of searchlights and apparently cut off a gigantic chunk from the slab of the sky with their unbending blades, and a house, no, not a house, but this cheerless, cut-off black piece of sky tumbled down into the street.

Weiss, deafened, picked himself up. He had time to reach the entrance to the subway at that moment when the wall of another house, slowly leaning over, suddenly showered down in an avalanche of brick.

Under the low arches of the shallow underground on the brick area of the platform, closely huddled together, sat and lay people side by side.

The tiled walls of the subway were covered with advertisements illustrating confectionary items, beers, bars, and invitations to visit pleasure establishments and famous restaurants. Members of the military police with copper badges in the form of a crescent on their chests checked documents by the light of pocket flashlights. The pale disk of light of these flashlights possessed, it seemed, the force of a blow, because heads flinched back at its approach as if a fist had been raised over them.

The military police made use of the bombings for exposing those who were subject to total mobilization -- young boys and old men.

It was simpler to make the inspection in the bomb shelters than to arrange round-ups in houses and on the streets. It was not as troublesome and was safer to work in a shelter without having to hurry and having to run the risk of bombings.

They found here also the mentally deranged. They took them away to "hospitals" and gave them there an injection of potassium cyanide into the heart -- on the order of purifying the race of defective copies.

The Gestapo people were boors. The members of the military.

police behaved more courteously. They treated the "deserters" discovered to cigarettes. And those who were in shoes had their shoelaces cut so that the future defenders of the Reich would not think about making off when they were being driven to a collecting point.

No one cried out, complained or thrashed about when the thunder of a cave-in was heard. The people were afraid that they would be suspected of mental defectiveness. The mothers bent lower over their children, instinctively trying to protect them with their own bodies. They lay, sat and stood without moving, silently, like prisoners in their cell after sentencing.

Until this time Weiss had been governed by a smoldering hatred of the Nazis only because of his own people. But now he also wanted to take revenge on them for these Germans, for these same people sentenced to execution by bombing.

Weiss knew that many Germans were moved to participate in their crimes by sops from the military gains of the Nazis. They gave up into slavery to them women and young girls brought in from the occupied territories. A plentitude of food for gorging was created by robbing the people in the captured lands and dooming them to hunger. Almost three million persons brought in from the countries of Europe worked as slaves for the Germans. They built houses, roads, plowed and sowed for them.

But all these blessings received from the rulers of the Third Reich had to be paid off in kind: not in pfennigs, but with fathers, husbands, and sons clothed in uniforms the color of pfennigs.

Such was the commodity circulation of the Reich.

Johann saw and understood. Only one thing could stop the sufferings of the German people -- an exploit of the Soviet Army and a crushing blow which would throw down the gauntlet and trample down Nazism like a crawling reptile whose slippery loops entwined the body of Germany and was continuing to smother the best of its sons in the torture chambers of the Gestapo.

What could Weiss do here? The only thing that he could permit himself -- this was to order the members of the military police to leave the bomb shelter immediately. He ordered them to patrol the street in order to expose supposed enemy signallers.

He chased them outside and followed after them himself. After returning, Weiss noticed how those liable to conscription were following him with dumb-founded and gladdened looks of people sentenced to death and suddenly having received a pardon.

The first echelon of bombers unloaded. Houses damaged by high-explosives noiselessly blazed up. Thermite bombs had ignited them.

This method of bombing -- a mixture of high-explosives with incendiaries -- was called a "cocktail" by the allies.

Weiss went out into the street, which did not exist, -- its ruins were aflame like lava flowing out from under the earth. He walked along the asphalt strewn with fragments of glass as if along shattered ice.

Huge residential buildings lay in heaps of brick as if a rocky cliff had crashed down and crumbled away into shallow water.

The walls still standing jutted up like sharply-pointed rocks. On a smoking pile of bricks rising up not too far away, Weiss saw half-naked, skeleton-like people. They were clearing away a trench in the ruins, similar to those which are dug by archeologists during the excavation of an ancient city.

"Dmitriy Ivanych!" Weiss heard a quiet, hoarse voice. "Shift the five men over. A site has been found where the top covering is easier to break through."

Five men scrambled out of the trench and, stooping under the weight of their crowbars, started to clamber along the debris.

Their bodies and clothing were full of lime and brick dust. Their legs were as thin as those of swamp birds and their stomachs were hollow. But on their torsos and arms, the muscles stood out like on mock-ups for the training of medical personnel.

Then Weiss saw that the same kind of emaciated people were raising up a heavy metal beam and it seemed to him that through the clanking of metal he could hear how the muscles of these people, who were putting out an inhuman effort, were creaking. It seemed that it was necessary for them to match the toughness of the iron.

Here, rescuing the residents buried in the bottom of the bomb shelters, worked prisoners of war.

Suddenly, SS personnel in helmets and holding black German police dogs on leashes appeared. The dogs trembled and pressed themselves to the legs of their handlers. The flames and the rumble of distant explosions frightened them.

The SS men took up posts in torn-up bomb craters or in shelter next to gigantic blocks of ruins. It was obvious to everyone that they were not so much worried that one of the prisoners of war would escape

as much as of the danger of a new raid.

The rescue teams formed from among the German population worked only after the all-clear signal. The war prisoners were also driven out even when an area was undergoing a bombing attack.

Probing with crow-bars, the people broke through the top covering. Their hands and legs were wrapped up in rags and on their bodies were bloody streaks from wounds caused by pieces of fixture iron or the sharp edges of rocks. But there was something strange -- on their dry faces with senile wrinkles there was not observable even a trace of depression. They cheerfully shouted to one another while competing in dexterity and efficiency. It seemed that they were filled with a consciousness of the importance of their job and the fact that right now they were here -- the most important ones.

It was bitter-sweet for Weiss to hear Russian talk, to observe how emphatically and respectfully they called each other by their first name and patronymic, with what relish they were pronouncing words from the area of construction technology and conferring while developing the most advantageous plan of approach to the chamber of the bomb shelter.

Half-naked, haggard and emaciated, they looked the way as the slaves must have looked in Ancient Egypt while building the pyramids; their work tools were almost just as primitive. Only their work was even harder and more dangerous.

"Hurrah!" resounded a penetrating cry. "Hurrah, guys, let's pick it up!" An enormous chunk thrown from the top of ruins came rolling topsy-turvy downward.

Weiss hardly had time to scuttle away. He understood that, while making a super-human effort to throw over the block, these people still tried to throw it over in such a way as to hurt the German officer eyeing them from below.

They laughed loudly when Weiss shied away to the side in fright.

One of them shouted:

"Hey, swine, did your legs jerk? You've already learned how to run from us!" And added a salty remark such as Weiss had not heard now for a long time.

The guard came up to Johann and, after asking for the officer's pardon, advised him to step a little bit more to the side.

"They work like the devil," he said to Weiss, but at the same

time they don't pilfer and don't even take the rings off the dead. And if they do take something, it's only something to eat. They call it 'khleb' in Russian. Without a doubt they've gone out of their minds in the camps. If they were normal, they would steal. The rings could be easily hidden. We search them only once over lightly."

"Hey, nitwit!" shouted the apparent senior from among the prisoners to the guard. "Geben zi mir! Bitte, di lantern!"

The guard unfastened the electric lamp hung on a belt strap with a snap and, before giving it to the prisoner, informed Weiss:

"Oh, they've already broken through to the chamber!" And he promised with a smile: "It'll now be interesting to watch how they pull out the people."

After some time the prisoners formed a line near the aperture dug through the top covering and began to pass the injured from hand to hand. The last ones in this chain carried the wounded to the asphalt and carefully laid them down in a row.

The last ones of all taken out of the obstruction were the Germans who had not been injured. Among them was an elderly man. He dashed up to the guard and, pointing at a stoop-shouldered prisoner of war, bellowed:

"This one permitted himself to hit me with his fist in the chest! Here is my party badge. I order you to teach the impudent pup a lesson right here and now, on the spot! Give me a pistol, I myself will..."

The leader of the prisoners-of-war came up. He was tall, grey-haired and had a stern expression on his intelligent face. He asked the guard in German:

"What happened?"

The guard said:

"This man hit the Herr Councillor in the bomb shelter."

The senior turned to the round-shouldered prisoner:

"Vasiliy Ignatovich, is this true?"

The round-shouldered one said sullenly:

"First, the wounded, then the children and women. But he,"

he nodded toward the councillor, "pushed everyone aside and wanted to be the first to crawl out. Well, I asked him to stay in line. It's true, I shoved him."

"You broke the rules," said the senior, trying to explain to the councillor, "the wounded come first and then..."

"I'm the boss in my own home!" shouted the councillor. "Just let the Russian swine try to teach me the rules!" And he tried to pull the pistol out of the guard's holster.

Weiss stepped up to the councillor:

"Your documents."

The councillor with a satisfied smile reached for his wallet and took out an identification card.

Weiss put it into his pocket without looking at it and said curtly:

"The regional office of the Gestapo will decide and will return it to you or not."

"But why, Herr Officer?"

"You attempted in my presence to disarm a member of the guard. And you'll get the punishment you deserve for that." And, after turning to the guard, he snarled contemptuously: "And you're also a good one. You had your weapon taken away, and you behaved like a coward during it!" He wrote down the guard's number and ordered: "Take away the arrested one and make a report on his criminal acts. That's all!"

And Weiss would have left if at this time a vehicle had not rolled up to the ruins and Zubov had not jumped out. His suit was covered with brick dust.

The senior prisoner of war came to attention before Zubov and reported in German:

"A passage has been made and the tenants of the house have been carried out of the bomb shelter to the surface."

"What's with House 123?" asked Zubov.

"We need explosives."

"For what?"

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"The people are working," said the senior gloomily, "but the wall will soon collapse and then everyone will die."

"You know very well that I don't have the right to give explosives to prisoners of war," said Zubov.

"Well, then both your people and our people will die."

"Let's go take a look." And Zubov casually waved with a glove to the two soldiers accompanying him.

Weiss decided to remain. He only crossed over to the other side of the street and, not hurrying, followed after Zubov and the senior. A high wall of smooth enormity rose high above the ruins. Zubov and the senior man stood at its base and conferred about something.

"Screzha!" suddenly shouted the senior prisoner of war.
"Screzha!"

A thin, young man separated from the group of prisoners of war and went up to the senior man.

Then Weiss saw how this young man nimbly began to scale along the broken edge of the wall. He was engirdled by a wire which rolled off a metallic reel in measure with the youngster's climbing.

After reaching the top of the wall, he sat down on it, pulled in a hemp rope with the wire and tied it between the openings of two windows. He pulled in cables and tied them first around beams and then around openings. After finishing, he wanted to slide down to the ground on the cable, but the senior man shouted:

"You can't make it, I forbid it!"

The young man obediently descended along the edge of the wall.

Then the prisoners of war took up the cables and at the command of the senior man began to pull on them at one time.

The wall shook and crashed down. A rumble was heard and clouds of dust rose up.

Taking long steps, Zubov left the place where the wall was to fall; his face was embittered and his lips were pressed tight.

Stopping, he began to shake the dust off himself.

Weiss went up to him.

Zubov, after straightening up and hardly glancing at Weiss, said:

"One was crushed anyhow." He waved his arm in distress and, suddenly remembering, exclaimed in amazement: "You? But you were hanged!"

"As you see, no."

"Wait awhile," said Zubov, "I'll be back right away."

He went into the ruins and did not return for a long time.

A raid by aircraft began anew. The earth shivered and, from the vortex of a blast wave, clouds of brick dust rose all around. But through it Weiss saw how people were laying out the trench in search of a place where it would be most convenient to break through a passage into the bomb shelter.

Finally, Zubov appeared, but first he said something to his companions and they, obviously carrying out his order, hurriedly drove away in the vehicle. Then Zubov called over the senior man of the prisoners of war and asked:

"You people have been working for two days around the clock without food. Should I order the guards to take them back to the camp?"

"No," said the senior man, "how can we? There, under the ground, people are still suffering. Why should we give up on them?"

Zubov thought for awhile and then, coming alive, advised:

"Dig a passage over there, where the pastry shop sign is dangling."

"We still don't have enough personnel for it," said the senior man. "It could be that, later, when the desired..." He requested, "Order the guard not to block us."

Zubov nodded and gave the command to the guard. And only then did he come to Weiss and, looking him in the eyes announced:

"Well, it's so wonderful that you're still alive that I can't put it into words for you!"

The vehicle came back for Zubov. Zubov opened the door for Weiss.

"We'll talk later."

They were silent the whole way and only seldom allowed themselves to look each other in the eyes. Over the area from which they had just driven away, a raid broke out with new fury.

The sunrise colored the surface of Lake Wannsee in delicate, rosy tones. It seemed to Weiss that there was a mirage before him.

Near a dock stood small yachts and sports craft made out of redwood.

The vehicle went down to the lake shore and came to a stop near a bath house.

Zubov, like a host, ascended to a board walk and pushed the door into the bath house with his foot. He said sullenly:

"Let's take a dip." And he started to disrobe.

Weiss, looking at the powerful, muscular figure of Zubov, remarked:

"Just the same, you're healthy, old man!"

"I was," said Zubov. "But now I'm not that limber anymore." His patted protuberances like croquet balls and biceps and complained: "Nerves." He ran up to dive and, springing high on the spring board, jumped into the water and furiously swam with the crawl.

Weiss caught up to him with difficulty and asked angrily:

"What are you, a fool?"

"What's the matter?" asked Zubov in fright.

"Can you really swim the crawl?"

"Well, excuse me, I was carried away," confessed Zubov. Spitting out water in distaste, he announced: "Every rich swine bathes here. They've even stunk up the water with eau-de-cologne."

"This is lilac," explained Weiss. He lifted up his head and breathed in the aroma. "It's the smell of flowers."

"And what do they smell for?" angrily asked Zubov. "They've found the time to smell!"

"Well, friend, it's you that is off-base --- flowers in any case."

"It really is flowers," agreed Zubov reluctantly. He dived deeply and did not appear on the surface for a long time. He came to the surface, breathed out loudly and said with delight: "On the bottom the springs will singe your whiskers they're so cold and it's as dark there as in a mine." He swam toward the shore with a breast stroke, turned his head and asked maliciously: "Did you see how stylishly I disguised myself? No worse than you, professor!"

They climbed up on the floating dock of the bath house and lay down on the warm, already heated by the sun, boards. Weiss noticed a new scar from a wound on Zubov's body, covered over with a still quite thin, wrinkled skin like a film on milk.

"Where did you get this?"

Zubov unwillingly looked up.

"What are you interested in?"

"With the very latest, of course."

"Well, okay," said Zubov, hoping to avoid an answer. "I'm still alive!"

"But, how come?"

Zubov remained silent, scooped up a handful of water, drank from it and then said hoarsely:

"I had to go into the ghetto in Warsaw with my men, but only after the uprising when their fighters had already been almost all slaughtered. Everything around was burning, and people were wrapping their children in mattresses and, after embracing, jumping to the ground from the upper stories. And from below they were firing on them out of automatic weapons..."

"Well, I organized a defense. Young girls and boys, still school children, were there. I broke my cover and told them that I was a Russian... There was a moment... they didn't believe me, called over an old man who had once lived in Russia and he confirmed it. I took him along with me as an interpreter until he was killed. But he had already established authority for me and they began to obey. We hit the Nazis, and very small children crawled to the bodies -- after weapons and cartridges. I yelled "Back!" -- but they didn't listen. And splinters were flying from the bricks because of firing. And they were still just children!" He rubbed his forehead with his palm. "They started to shoot at our group with artillery. I caught a fragment in my shoulder. And I was alone at a machine gun -- both the first and second helpers got it."

"And what about the group?"

"What about it, what about it? Well, there was no group. I had lost ninety per cent. I found myself an assistant, such a bright lad and not afraid of anything. I had just taught him how to fire the weapon when it was all over -- he was shot. I started to bandage him up. But he told me in Polish: 'Please, you're not a doctor, you have to shoot.' He crawled away to the edge of the roof so that I wouldn't be able to reach him and there at the rain gutter he died. Then I had an old woman and her daughter as helpers. The daughter was a physician and knew how to bandage well, but when I was wounded for the third time they were no more. Somebody dragged me into a cellar, there I rested awhile and then crawled out. I worked a machine gun -- gave orders until the old men, women and children had disappeared into a sewer opening. They were then suffocated there by the Germans with smoke pots."

"And you?"

"As concerns me, I survived. In the night the Nazis roved around the deserted ghetto with their boots wrapped up in rags so that their steps could not be heard and, as they found someone alive, they finished them off.

For my personal safety I worked further with a knife and refrained from firing. I became completely exhausted and fell over unconscious.

I came to in a hole in the ground carefully bandaged up. Well, they took care of me as if I was the best man on earth. You've never seen such people! They had nothing to breathe there themselves -- there was no air way. You'd know it, they shared their food and water -- and this at a time when there was nothing to breathe. And there was such a strong, hulking brute such as I grinding my teeth in pain and sucking up the last air. I crawled away from them. I saw that the children were turning blue so I crawled away.

And, just imagine, I ran suddenly into Voditsa with Ptashek: we crawled out of a sewer opening. They, it turned out, had sawed through the grating where the outlet from the tunnel to the Visla is for the refugees. Some of them were saved -- those who didn't drown. Well, that's where I, apparently, also gave out. How they dragged me out of there, I don't know.

After two weeks or so I worked one diversion not too well with them. Everything turned out well, but something smelled of the Gestapo. I hinted to Brigitte that it wouldn't be a bad idea to evacuate to Berlin and, well, she pushed something through."

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Zubov lowered his head and muttered:

"But, generally-speaking, it is not possible in human words to tell you how it was there in the ghetto!" He looked out on the lake and added: "There isn't enough sea to wash such things out of one's memory. That's what." He got up and began to dress. "From Berlin the tourist buses drove up. There was a special stop near the Warsaw ghetto. The big bellies were diverted just like in church. It could be that they were from the villas here."

"So what are you reckoned to be right now among the Germans?" asked Weiss.

"As you see," "unwillingly forced out Zubov. "I'm in command of a Todt line of rescue detachments made up of Germans, but mainly out of prisoners."

"Well, and how?"

Zubov said confusedly:

"Our own people at first arranged to kill me. The people carried out the assignments, you understand, in an organized manner. One scoundrel reported it to me. Well, I got excited, of course. To accept death from one's own people -- this is nothing to be calm about. And then I made a decision: I shot down this vile creature on somekind of pretext or other during a rescue, but so that all would understand for what reason. As he was dragged away, I said that he had been a no-good informant. Well, apparently, they themselves had already suspected this villain. A day later the senior man came up to me and asked 'Herr Commissar, you shot our comrade. Did he want to do something bad to you?' I told him 'not to me, but to you.' This is exactly what I told him. We looked each other in the eyes and separated. It turned out that they changed their decision after this -- there have been many opportunities to kill me, but they haven't made use of them."

"And have there been cases of escape?"

"Absolutely. They take off and how!" grinned Zubov.

"But, really, this could reflect back on you."

"Why? I fill out a form and everything's taken care of! I say he was caught while escaping and shot on the spot -- I have every right to do this. And for some I write down in the lists that they perished during bombing attacks or in cave-ins. My bookkeeping on such matters is perfectly in order." He said enviously: "I am

touched by everything. They have among them a party and another organization. They also decide who will escape and when. They live as a collective. And for them I'm just like a pawn -- not a person and only a figure."

"Listen, and why do they work so hard?"

"Because they're really rescuing people."

"Germans," reminded Weiss.

"Well, what did you expect!" said Zubov indignantly. "You know, when they carry the crushed children out of the collapsed bomb shelters, it's impossible to look. It's as if they were one's own, these little kids." He sighed: "That's the kind of heart the Soviet people have! And who can say whether this is a weakness or a strength..."

"And what do you think?"

"What?" Well, here's what I think."

They sat down at a small table on an open veranda of a cafe which was free of customers at this early hour. The waiter, without having asked for their order, brought over coffee, rolls, artificial honey and diminutive portions of natural butter the size of a ten pfennig coin.

Zubov took a sip of coffee and made a wry face.

"I'm tired ... this swill. It would be better to order beer."

"What are you thinking about? Beer -- in the morning? That's not done here."

"Well, then the soup of the day."

"Fine, but don't fool around," said Weiss.

Zubov looked at the sky, dirty from smoky fires and all in crimson sheens as if soaked with blood, and asked angrily.

"You explain something to me. Our allies are bombing Germany. But why is it that German industry not only has not reduced the output of product, but, quite the reverse, is constantly increasing it and the culminating point of the production of aircraft goes on the same during the heaviest bombing attacks? And all these armaments are turned against us."

"And the allies aim not against installations, but only against

The German populace -- for the purpose of terrorizing it and causing panic," said Weiss, continuing his thought.

"But the Gestapo has so terrorized the population, that where is the sense in the bombing attacks!" said Zubov. "Not long ago more than three hundred thousand persons were subjected to reprisals. And, you understand, last night I saw how the milk tank trucks of the "Dolle" Firm and the motor vehicles of the Berlin Fire Department took away to the Eastern Front the stationary batteries which are a part of Berlin's antiaircraft defense system. And earlier many antiaircraft railroad weapons were sent there. I'm not even talking about the squadrons of night fighters taken away from the Berlin antiaircraft defense for that same purpose. It seems that the allies should say to the Nazis: 'Thank you, the service is great'." He made a face as if from a tooth ache. "This strategy is obscene, that's what I say to you! Instead of breaking the back of Germany's military industry, they are hitting the civilian population together with the Gestapo. The allies are intensifying the air terror and the Gestapo -- the police terror. And the German gets from all this nothing, except perhaps only to the front. All are swept up clean by total conscription. They are also herded to the Eastern Front." He said maliciously: "I was there at one military plant and looked around. Germans who are serving out their labor service are put in for 12 hours a day each. An air raid warning went off -- they kept on working. That, I think is a people! And how did it turn out? There was no bomb shelter, but anyone who leaves his machine is a saboteur, and he has a direct path into a concentration camp. In the plant zones the antiaircraft personnel are not on duty, but Gestapo details. That's also the whole trick. The largest military plants are located outside the limits of cities and our allies are not bombing them -- not that target." He remained quiet for a minute and sighed: "I'm working on something in my free time from emergency work."

"With what, namely?" asked Weiss.

"Just little things," answered Zubov tiredly. "We're stealing explosives from a construction project of a bomb shelter for the high command and, well, we're using it for the designed purpose."

"You have, then, a group again?"

"Yes, a small one," said Zubov evasively. "But brave guys. I'm teaching them, of course, to work without superfluous independence. Not too long ago they killed one agent from your 'Vali' headquarters."

"How did you find out about the agent?"

"We have a man, a messenger -- he gave us signs and reported that this agent would arrive in Berlin on a train with one escort.

We met both with honors in a vehicle and drove off. As always, there was a bombing attack. Well, we also stopped at a bomb shelter which I had built on special order, but hadn't turned over to the client yet. Well, they went in, were interrogated and condemned. Everything according to law, just as it should be." Zubov raised his eyes and asked: "And you, how about it, are you a German all the time, without a break?" He shook his head. "I wouldn't be able to do it. My soul would shrivel. Are you made of iron that you can hold up under such a load?" He shrugged his shoulders. "There's one thing I can't understand -- how the devil you could pose as a noble German in prison? Well, Mueller would knock his Shellenberg, and let them bicker. Why stick your head in the noose?"

Weiss said:

"Last year the Gestapo arrested some of Himmler's agents returning home after secret diplomatic talks with the representatives of English and American intelligence and accused them of illegal import of foreign exchange. And Himmler signed their death sentence only because they had insisted that he be notified about their arrest.

"Discipline!" laughed Zubov.

"No," said Weiss, "not only. This is the method of their secret service -- not to burden themselves with people who have taken a false step. There are also other, swifter procedures. The co-worker is not given any indication that he has made a mistake. He is sent to the doctor. This one gives him an injection -- and it's over."

"It's understandable," Zubov patted Johann's hand. "You're already there with them and should try to be hard as a piece of iron." And he added sorrowfully: "And it's not necessary that we see each other anymore. I'm not too fastidious a person and sometimes I work crudely."

"Well, and how is Brigitte?"

On Zubov's face appeared an expression of tenderness.

"Nothing, we're getting along." He bent forward and said shyly in a happy whisper: "We're going to have a baby. It would be nice to postpone it until the arrival of our army. I would then register it as a Soviet citizen according to all rules of law."

"But would Brigitte agree?"

"We'll prevail," said Zubov confidently. "There'll be all the conditions for a complete argumentation. I'll lay out the whole picture of our life before her then. She won't be able to resist. She has a

keen feel for the best."

Weiss stood up and offered him his hand.

"Well, what then, forgive me," sighed Zubov sadly. "I've become nervous. Before I wasn't afraid to die, but now it's very undesirable. The closer our army approaches, the harder it becomes to wait..."

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Gustav dropped by to visit Weiss in his cottage and, as if off-handedly, inquired as to what kind of impression the participants of the conspiracy with whom he had been imprisoned had made on him.

Weiss said scornfully:

"The most pitiful."

Gustav, not looking at Weiss, remarked:

"Stauffenberg, in order to save his arrested friends from execution, had tried on his own initiative to carry out an attempt on the Fuehrer's life already on 11 June."

"Tell me about it, what chivalry!" smiled Weiss.

"It seems that one general, after becoming a participant in the plot, informed to the Reichsfuehrer about it the whole time."

"Well, then, this general should be counted in the staff of the Gestapo."

"And he also did not desert his own secret service there. By the way, Hans Speidel, Field Marshal Rommel's chief of staff, also reported it to his chief."

"But Rommel, it seems, died in an automobile accident?"

"Yes, so it was," agreed Gustav, "and, apparently, because he didn't fall victim to the injuries received in this accident, someone of the employees suggested to him that he take poison, which he also did."

"The Hero of Africa -- and such an inglorious end!"

"He was once a favorite of the Fuehrer's," reminded Gustav.

Weiss, looking searchingly into his eyes, asked:

"Obviously you didn't want to hear my opinion about Rommel?"

"Of course, not about Rommel, but about those others," said Gustav, shaking his head.

"Essentially," said Weiss severely, "as much as I could understand from their conversations, the leaders of the conspiracy had decided to capitulate to the West so that they could then begin an offensive on the Eastern Front. It was purely a military and political maneuver -- and only. And even though they made an attempt on the Fuehrer's life, they wanted to revive his spirit for all eternity."

"In what person?"

"I suppose in the person of the new Fuehrer. But," ironically noted Weiss, "Goebbels accurately described this conspiracy as 'telephonic'."

Gustav was silent for a moment and then recommended in a friendly way:

"If our boss comes to you with this same kind of question, answers given by you in this vein would satisfy him. They are fearless, intelligent and give evidence of your acumen."

"Thank you," nodded Weiss.

Gustav smiled.

"Allow me to hand you a secret package. Sign on the envelope and don't forget, besides the date, to indicate the exact time."

When Gustav had departed and Johann opened the package, he saw that same document which previously, during their first meeting, Walter Schellenberg had shown him. Only now on the certification had been glued his own photograph.

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Soon Weiss again traveled to Switzerland. This time a group consisting of three people was under his supervision.

His duties included the meeting and setting up of people arriving in Switzerland and the determination of whether they were being observed. In addition, he had to receive the couriers from Berlin and to dispatch them back as well as to inspect the sealed courier pouches with steel netting before assigning them to the couriers or receiving them from the couriers.

If the documents were of extraordinary importance, a flat, portable mine with a timing mechanism was placed into these secured pouches. In that case if the courier was detained enroute, the mine after running out would destroy both the documents and the courier.

After receiving such a pouch, Weiss had to open up the secret pocket in the steel netting in which the mine was secreted and with a key of certain shape stop the timing mechanism. After this, he turned over the pouch to the one it concerned. When he dispatched a courier, he set the timing mechanism, but with a completely different key.

Johann quickly enough worked out a method which made it possible to remove documents out of the pouch and to photograph them. However, he was forced during this time not to stop the timing mechanism of the mine even though the couriers delivering a pouch were often late and a mine could have run out while he was still occupied with his undertaking. It was risky to stop the timing mechanism before beginning to work -- during a control inspection of the dial it would be discovered that the mine had been rendered harmless before it was handed over to whom it was intended.

In order to obtain the possibility of working on the sealed pouches without special interference, Weiss suggested to his SD superiors that a tiny piece of photographic film be inserted into a pre-arranged place in the pouch. In that case, if the pouch had been opened, it would have been easy to detect inasmuch as the film would have been exposed. He also thought up a trap to obtain evidence of tampering: the netting was dusted with a special invisible powder from a pulverizer. And if someone had touched the netting, finger prints would have been left on it.

In Switzerland Weiss led the life of a stern pedant, demanding of himself and other people. He was extraordinarily efficient and so much devoted to work and so absorbed by his job that his co-workers took a dislike to him for his unsociability, puritanism and implacable strictness.

Days, one the same as another, passed by with agonizing slowness. But during all these days the Nazis carried on talks with the English and Americans about the signing of an agreement. Dulles in secret from the USSR treacherously conferred with the Germans on a separate peace. And almost on every one of these days Weiss dispatched photographic film to the Center by messenger. What had been taken on them he did not know. He had not had time to read the documents while photographing them.

On that day, when on behalf of the Soviet Government the

People's Commissariat of Foreign Affairs USSR pointed out in a letter of objection to the United States ambassador that "in the course of two weeks behind the back of the Soviet Union, which is carrying the basic weight of the war against Germany, conversations are being conducted between representatives of the German military command on one side and representatives of the English and American command on the other," on that day Weiss was already in Berlin again. He did not know about this note, just as he also did not know about the content of those documents, photocopies of which were sent almost regularly to the Center. And he remembered his sojourn in Switzerland then as one of the most boring and dull periods of his life.

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Unexpectedly Weiss received from Gustav strange-enough instructions. He had to go into library files and occupy himself with searches of books, manuscripts and documents touching on the activities of secret organizations which had ever existed in the history of mankind. It was necessary to study literally everything, whether medieval manuscripts about secret monastic orders or contemporary American editions about the Ku-Klux-Klan and writings about the Carbonarists, Illusionists, Irish Sin Fein and the Masons.

This exercise was not only not burdensome, but even interesting and gave him the possibility of becoming acquainted with many collectors of rare volumes and ancient manuscripts.

From the curator of the Berlin university library, Johann learned that already in 1942 after the defeat of the Wehrmacht near Moscow, Heydrich had ordered the removal everywhere of books of such character for his personal use. Johann asked the curator to compile a list of the books turned over to Heydrich and, if possible, to annotate them orally. The curator, possessing an excellent memory, had done this with exhaustive accuracy, the more so since at no time had he been assigned to make up the content of such books in writing in order to facilitate Heydrich's becoming acquainted with them.

The curator recalled specially approvingly the Japanese literature on this subject, where various secret organizations were described. Johann remembered that Hess had in his time studied the activities of the intelligence services in Japan and had written a dissertation on them for which he had been given a scientific award. When he talked about this with the curator, the curator with self-satisfaction remarked that he had had the honor of helping Hess in the work on the dissertation. Weiss paid the curator generously for the books and manuscripts taken from the university library and arranged that he would render to him the same help in the work that he had once rendered to Hess.

After some time Weiss informed Gustav that not only had he collected the books indicated to him, but had even made up something on the order of a tentative reference for their use.

Gustav familiarized himself thoroughly with the voluminous research and was impressed with its thoroughness and predicted pertinency. And, obviously, as a reward for the work done by Weiss, he was permitted to hand over personally to Walter Shellenberg all the collected materials: books, manuscripts and the meticulously referenced bibliography.

When Weiss arrived in Hohenliechen and handed over to the duty officer the boxes with books and the sealed file with his manuscript, he was ordered to wait.

The duty officer departed for a short time, then returned, stretched out his open hand and demanded:

"Your weapon!" and, after ordering Weiss to follow him, he led Weiss up to a lake, and then stretched out a hand to a side path: "Go straight ahead."

Johann was walking out into the indicated direction when suddenly he was stopped by the quiet command:

"Halt!"

Under a canopy of huge chestnut trees sat Shellenberg on a bench, and next to him -- Reichsfuehrer Himmler.

On a table in front of them lay the open file with Weiss' manuscript.

Weiss came to attention and made his report to the Reichsfuehrer.

Himmler sat with his arms thrown over the back of the bench and one leg tossed over the other. His eyes were distinguished by an unpleasant, dead expression. The lenses of his eyeglasses glittered icily. He had a thin neck with flabby skin, narrow shoulders and -- what was most loathsome -- delicate, feminine hands with rosy, polished fingernails. He also had a big, white and greasy forehead, flabby, weakly hanging cheeks and button-sized ears.

Shellenberg indicated the manuscript with his eyes.

"The Reichsfuehrer has admired your work."

Weiss again snapped to attention and froze. Ah!, if he only had a pistol! His face became pale from despair...

Bending to the Reichsfuehrer, Shellenberg, glancing at Weiss, said:

"You only have to look at him, and you will be convinced what a trembling respect you inspire in my people."

Himmler laughed heartily, but thereby his eyes did not lose their dead expression. He asked in a surprisingly thin voice:

"Are you the one who was supposed to be hung?"

"... my Fuehrer."

Himmler, as if not having noted that he had been awarded the title of Fuehrer, slightly moving forward in order to look into Weiss' face better, inquired:

"And why weren't you hung then? You really did break the currency laws of the Reich."

"Guilty, my Fuehrer," said Weiss.

"So then," said Himmler, "if you give us a new occasion we'll remember this crime of yours and then you'll not escape the noose." He turned around to Shellenberg and explained: "I only then believe in loyalty when it is based on fear," and waved a hand.

Weiss saluted, turned, clicked his heels went along the path to the exit, trying to step firmly and smartly.

When he returned to Bismarckstrasse, the waiting Gustav informed him happily:

"Congratulations, you made a favorable impression on the Reichsfuehrer!"

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Even earlier, when Johann was occupied with the search for books for Himmler, he unexpectedly met Hakke --- a former radio operator in "Headquarters Vali." Hakke was in a Gestapo uniform. He told Johann that during the early morning hours of 23 November 1943 when the Gestapo building in Berlin, Prince Albrechtstrasse 8 was bombed out, he had been there in the third story where Himmler's personal headquarters was located and only survived by a miracle.

As a mark of special respect toward Weiss for the fact that at one time he had come to his assistance, Hakke informed him confidentially:

"During a bombing attack everyone was concerned only about how to save his own skin. The most important documents were burning, but nobody gave them a second thought."

"And you?" asked Weiss.

Hakke winked slyly.

"After everybody betrayed me then, I went into the Security Service. And in that terrible night I undertook something to guarantee my personal security for the future." He said maliciously: "There are many people just like me now!" And showed a clenched fist.

Weiss, pretending that he had not understood Hakke's hint, remarked approvingly:

"Of course, now, when you're working in the Gestapo, nobody and nothing can threaten you."

"Clear," agreed Hakke and right then and there invited Weiss to come home with him.

It was apparent from everything that here in Berlin Hakke knew how to take care of himself. His room was full of expensive things. Near a sofa covered with a downy rug, Johann noticed a fire-proof strong-box. It for some reason did not stand, but lay on the floor under a door covered by the rug coming down from the sofa.

While leaving, Weiss noted down Hakke's address and telephone number. About himself he said that he had driven to Berlin for a short time on an assignment.

That evening Johann informed Zubov through the letter drop of Hakke's address and recommended that he interest himself in the contents of the fire-proof box if the house where Hakke lived was bombed and such an opportunity presented itself.

In these days Johann learned about an extremely strange operation which was allegedly being conducted on Himmler's instructions. Agents of the police had received several thousand photographs and a card file of distinguishing features of certain nameless people. They had to be found in Berlin within two weeks, but the use of weapons thereby was most strictly forbidden. Undoubtedly, something was concealed behind this and, apparently, it was important because all the best criminal police had been mobilized.

Weiss went to the police directorate and complained as though among the photographs of the people being sought the card file of an

agent of his, whose detention was extremely undesirable, had been mistakenly included.

The police officer suggested that he look through all the photographs of those being sought in order to pull out this one picture.

While shuffling through the packs of snapshots, Weiss discovered among them photo cards of several SS officers and Gestapo employees familiar to him, including that of Hakke also. After completing the task, he thanked the officer for his courtesy and said that he could not, unfortunately, find the photograph of his agent. But if an individual should be detained who said that his cover name was "Lunatic," the police officer was requested to telephone the Gestapo immediately. Johann became firmly convinced in his guess that the purpose of the operation was the training of individuals selected for "Werewolf."

While returning from the police, Weiss met on Koenigsallee Sturmbannfuehrer Klein, the chief of an experimental concentration camp which he had once visited together with Dietrich. After learning that Weiss was presently serving in the SD and had become an officer, Klein wanted, in his turn, to brag about his own successes. He stated that he had been called to Berlin to give a cycle of lectures for prominent figures of the SS and the Gestapo about rules of behavior, morals and habits of the prisoners in concentration camps. And that he had given lectures on these topics for the same type of listeners in other large cities.

"You, most likely, share your rich experience in dealing with prisoners also," suggested Weiss.

"No," answered Klein. "My subject is strictly limited -- the everyday life, morals, habits and rules of behavior of prisoners. The peculiarities of their cooperation with one another. The methods to which they resort for conspiracy and the concealment of those who are subject to liquidation as well as some peculiarities of their terminology." He patted Weiss on the shoulder and said condescendingly: "As concerns you, if you'll continue the exploits of the Nazis in other areas, there is no cause for worry. I am confident that it wouldn't be necessary to train you on how to conduct yourself with prisoners in order to earn their trust." He laughed loudly. "You understand me?"

"Fully." And Weiss added impressively: "I hope I don't surprise you too much if I tell you that the Resistance Movement interests me more. Well, to find oneself among underground workers is considerably more difficult than to be pleasant to one's own in a concentration camp."

"Undoubtedly," agreed Klein. "But these questions are outside my competence. Lectures on this subject for the same contingent of listeners are given by others."

"You don't remember, who?"

Klein wrinkled his brow.

"It seems, by former Social Democrats such as Haubach. Being among the conspirators who made the attempt on the Fuehrer's life, he considered it his duty to inform the Gestapo about everything." He added contemptuously: "One such was with me in the camp as an informant. And, imagine, after Stalingrad I received a directive to let him go, but then he was again returned and I was ordered to hold him in an exceptionally privileged status." He asked resentfully: "Do such people as he really count on swimming back into the political arena?"

"As frogs riding on the back of a scorpion."

"You're a clever guy," laughed Klein. "And just as soon as we swim over to the western shore, we'll drown them all."

"Without a doubt," agreed Weiss.

During one of his meetings with Johann, Henrich related that his uncle had now become a typical business executive; that he was manufacturing enormous quantities of food products which could be stored for long periods of time, as well as the most varied types of civilian clothing, including workers' garb. And, evidently wanting to hide his shame that he had been ordered to do such unattractive work, he was trying to make it seem that this assignment was particularly secret and important.

Weiss asked:

"And is all this being stored at some particular depot?"

"Oh no", replied Henrich, "they are hauling it off to some sort of settlements which aren't even shown on the map or to places where, to my belief, there aren't even settlements. And there's another interesting thing", Henrich smiled: Some time ago they closed all small enterprises which manufactured toys, fountain pens, and all sorts of other everyday items. And now they're working again, but just as secretly as war plants".

"Have you ever seen any of the products manufactured by such enterprises at your uncle's?"

"He keeps the models in a fire-proof cabinet."

"Yes," Johann said slowly, "this is indeed interesting" and added in a preoccupied manner: "If you, Henrich, are unable to note down the names of all the points to which Willy is sending equipment, it will be necessary to try to photograph a map on which these points are shown. And no matter how difficult it will be, you must obtain one of the models of these secret products. And be careful, Henrich, when you pick up such a toy."

"Why?"

"I think that they are capable of exploding", Johann said seriously. "The Fascist pilots have already dropped such things on Soviet cities, and children have been killed by the explosions when picking them up."

"Good", said Henrich, "We'll try. But why do you need a map of the locations of the storage areas? There must be hundreds of them. Wouldn't it be better to find out where the main depot is?"

"Neither food products nor clothing supplies, no matter how large they are, are of any importance whatsoever now. The main thing is to learn for whom and for what they are intended. If we know the points we will be able to explain this."

"You and I?" Henrich said with surprise. "Why, it would take us half a year to drive to all of them."

"By no -- I mean the Soviet Army. It has both the time and the people to do all this."

"And they want such trophies!" replied Henrich with a shocked look.

"Not to collect trophies, but to discover whom these stores are intended for," said Johann.

He was becoming increasingly convinced of the correctness of his suspicions which arose at the moment when Gustav ordered him to collect books on a certain subject for the Reichsfuehrer himself.

And he clearly understood Hitler's threat to hand him if anyone other than those who carried out assignments of the same nature should learn about this.

One day Johann had called Hakke on the telephone.

The latter actually cried with delight that Weiss had remembered him and had insisted that Johann come see him at once.

"I have lots of wonderful news", Hakke shouted into the phone. "Please come over at once!" Johann could hear how he tapped his foot with impatience while standing at the phone.

The Soviet Army was carrying out a strong attack into German territory and, at the same time, here was an exultant Nazi -- this was truly something to wonder at.

Hakke greeted Johann in a cotton apron, worn over his Gestapo uniform.

He was getting lunch ready, displaying unexpected culinary ability. Several bottles of freshly-opened and expensive wine stood on the table -- a sign of esteem for an important guest.

Hakke took Weiss's uniform hat in both hands and carefully, like something of great value, placed it on the table.

With a sly frown he said:

"Not long ago you were an oberleutnant and now look -- already a captain -- Hauptsharfuehrer. But Hakke, who is he?" He pulled

a long race, and then exiled. "But you know, my dear friend, the higher the position a person holds, the less he knows and sees. But we small-fry are everywhere, like ants, and are always ready for an all-round exchange of information." With obvious esteem, he added, "I know all the details of your misadventures and am proud of your stoicism. Our chief, Mr. Mueller said that people like you should be buried in a marble mausoleum."

"By buried?" asked Weiss.

"What do you mean?" replied Hake with surprise. "Mueller has been dreaming of hanging you to spite Schellenberg: he doesn't like him. I -- why should he? Imagine, a master of juridical sciences! He has lived off those sciences. Since 1934 -- an SD Sleuth in the universities of the Rhine."

"It's not a bad policy -- to work with the intelligentsia," Weiss remarked.

"I know", Hake clasped his hands in despair, "I know. You are ready to give up your life for your chief. But, I assure you, service in the Gestapo has its own particular advantages."

"What kind?" Weiss asked, becoming interested.

"In foreign political intelligence there are many university people. But here, in the Gestapo, the educated man is a figure. He not only knows how, like the rest of us, to knock out brains with his fists, but can make the person under investigation think that he would be happy if he were to be hanged a little sooner."

"I don't understand. How?"

"You don't understand? Here's an example -- Sturmfuehrer Klein. He was a professor at the University of Bonn. An educated man. We were looking over a certain journalist. His skin was in strips, but he wouldn't talk. Klein ordered him released. The journalist was seen by his friends in Berlin. Everyone learned that he was free and then we secretly arrested him again. And the Sturmfuehrer himself wrote several articles and published them over the journalist's name. But only in our style. The journalist learned of this and hung himself in his cell. This is style! But to maintain such style, one requires culture. Think about it," Hake said cryptically. After a silence, he added suggestively, "And Doctor Langeben was Kimalor's confidential emissary at secret talks with Dulles. And we, the Gestapo, arrested him when he was returning to Germany from Switzerland. What happened? The Reichsfuehrer didn't want to reveal his intimate secrets because of him."

"He hanged him" -- he sighed. "In foreign political intelligence it makes no difference that a flea is coaxed from the fur of the wolf. And there are tremendous prospects in the Gestapo for this right now", he confided in a significant tone, leaning forward: "I have accurate information: A large number of the SS leaders are now included in the list of participants in the plot against the Fuehrer. And there are more and more investigations of the most important party functionaries. These have even become known to the English and the Americans. I heard it on the radio myself: They were praising their allies for their struggle against Hitler."

"And have they all been arrested already?"

"No."

"Are they in hiding?"

The situation got a little awkward for Hakke.

"No."

"Strange", said Weiss with surprise. "Political criminals at liberty?"

Hakke's face became gloomy, worried. He said uncertainly:

"You're right. Something's wrong here" he admitted bitterly: "And I envied, dreamed falsely, hoped that they would be removed and possibilities would open up for us to get a higher position." He struck his fat knee with his fist and, grimacing from the pain, exclaimed: "And I, I thought that now I will climb the ladder! But what happened to them? They are leaving; the chiefs are getting ready to escape. Participants in the opposition! While I, a long-time Nazi, am being trampled under their feet!"

Hakke's face had become blood-red, wet with sweat, furious; his eyes, it seemed, were about to pop from his head. He lost all control of himself and leaning toward Weiss, with a heart-rending and uncontrolled voice, said, ~~clinging~~ on his words, as if in a delirium:

"The whole picture's clear: Leiner -- do you know him? He was recently buried with unusual ceremony: wreaths from the party, from the SD and the SS, from the top leaders. Speeches. His wife and children in hysterics. And the same evening I visited their villa to express my condolences. They were sitting having supper. Their faces were as calm as if nothing had happened. The dining room smelled of cigar smoke and there were ashes in the ashtray. But nobody in the family smokes except Leiner himself."

"You're wrong. You'll see, I assure you."

"No!", Hakkie exclaimed, becoming even more excited by Weiss's disbelief of his words. "No. I won't see! In one week there were eight such untimely deaths! And every one of the deceased, on the eve of his unexpected demise, somehow was able to turn the keys to his office safe over to the precise person who was to succeed him. Where does one obtain such perspicacity?"

"You have become dangerously anxious, Hakkie, Weiss chided him.

Weiss's laughter enraged Hakkie.

"No," he said. "I have always been able to keep my head. Only now I am beside myself. Listen to me: the racial-political administration of the Party used to keep a card file of the most pure Aryans, the Nazi elite. Professors had measured them with calipers and had noted down their complete pedigrees. And now the card files have been replaced. And do you know how these people are listed? They are listed as Jews! As Jews! Documents and clothing with red crosses on the back and yellow stripes have been brought to Party headquarters from the concentration camp for Jews in Bleckamer. And they have brought precisely the number of outfits in canvas bags as there are names in the card files where, in place of the boot Nazis they are now being listed as Jews."

"Cowards", said Weiss, "ready to do anything to save their skins."

"Yes," agreed Hakkie. And, in essence, not only insufficiently informed but, unfortunately, your ardour confirms that you are not trusted at work. That's the whole story."

"And you know all about this?" Hakkie replied with wonder.

"Of course", Weiss nodded. "And all this is being done in the interests of the future empire."

Hakkie poured himself some wine, drank it in a single gulp, bit his lip. Alarm came into his eyes.

"I have, it seems, spoken too much."

"What for?" said Weiss. I have listened to you with great interest. And have learned much of benefit to myself and, this means, to my service." Getting up and clasping his hands behind his back, he explained: "Indeed, it is also possible and necessary for us to

take steps to disguise ourselves. And we, of course, will somehow make use of your information. You don't object?"

"Only don't mention the source", Hakke pleaded frightened. "For God's sake."

"Good", agreed Weiss, "I can promise you this. But one favor for another: You will help me draw up a list on this question and I, on my own initiative, will present it to my leaders. And, I suppose that," he smiled, "Herr Mueller, transferring his dislike of my chief to the sphere of interservice relations, will not fully acquaint him with the full experience of the Gestapo in this direction. And if you give us what assistance you can, then I can be of use to you. Remember: we in the foreign service have certain contacts with Western intelligence services."

"I know," Hakke said in a low voice.

"Consequently, if we recommend you to them in a suitable way it won't be necessary for you to grow a beard.

"It seems to me," Hakke remarked uncertainly, "that they still value me to a degree in the Gestapo. At the command of the leaders I am now reading various Marxist works every day and am studying pamphlets put out by the underground".

"They want to plant you with them?"

"It's possible," said Hakke, "But I would not want this."

"Why not?"

"No matter how well I quacked quotations, the communists would know at once that I was a planted duck. I wouldn't last a day." A tone of envy came into his voice: "I have heard that they have recently brought up many beds in tuberculosis hospitals in Switzerland and certain of us are being sent there in ambulances and are being carried into the building on stretchers. But they are sending those, of course, who have occupied important positions." He sighed. "At the very most I would be sent to a phoney partisan detachment -- we are now forming them in Holland, Belgium, and Denmark. And then, as a Resistance member, I would remain there until better times."

"You're a dreamer", Weiss interrupted him. "And what would you live on?"

Hakke smiled.

"In these countries there are sufficiently wealthy people who supported the Nazis. From time to time I will remind them of this. I will be very discreet and will never demand more than I require to live in the most modest manner."

"This is wise", replied Weiss. "I see that you are thoroughly preparing for your own future."

"Like everybody else" agreed Hakke.

"But where are you getting all this information you have?"

"I already told you: small people work for big people. The telephone operators in the intercept service, the code clerks, the office employees, the adjutants, the rank-and-file employees -- we all share what we know about our masters. They never talk to us about anything, but they frequently converse with one another in our presence. Indeed, to them we're merely dunderheads, and that's all. It's not necessary to pay any attention to us. But not all of us are dunderheads", Hakke thought for a moment. Take Karl Langeben. He worked for Himmler, for Canaris, and for American Intelligence. And they all paid him well."

"But they hanged him", Weiss reminded.

"But they didn't hang him for this, not at all," Hakke said gloomily.

"For what then?"

"Langeben knew about the relations between Canaris and English Intelligence and, when the Gestapo arrested him, Himmler didn't want him to blab about this. And, indeed, Langeben was Himmler's best agent in the secret negotiations with the Americans. But if he talked about Canaris, the English would cease to look upon Himmler with the same favor. They say that the only reason they helped the Czech partisans to kill Heidrich was because he was getting ready to reveal Canaris as an English agent."

"And was Canaris really an English agent?"

"He maintained extremely friendly relations with English Intelligence. He shared with them his information about the Soviet Army which he had obtained through his own agents because he always had the goal of making the English our allies in a way against Russia."

"And why did they arrest Canaris: for his contacts with English Intelligence or because he had taken part in the plot against Hitler?"

"The Reichsfuehrer knew all about Canaris even before this."

"So. But why have they not sentenced him to execution now?"

"Because he knew that the Reichsfuehrer knew all about him -- this is surely the reason. And as long as he keeps quiet he will be able to enjoy all the comforts which are given to privileged prisoners. In general", said Hakke, "the old man has recently become completely useless. Heittel has said that Canaris's drive to always be on his feet and in action has changed with time into sort of an obsession. Canaris cannot sit still and, as he has become older, his passion for travelling has taken greater hold of him. He thought only of travels and completely stopped being interested in his relations with others. But on 20 July, when the attempt was made on Hitler's life, he was home. That entire day he sat at his villa near Berlin and never left it even to visit the plotters' headquarters on Bendler Strasse."

"Was he building himself an alibi?"

"Yes, to wiggle out as he has always been able to do. But not this time. Now the Reichsfuehrer has achieved what he has always been trying to achieve: all the services of the Abwehr have been merged in the SD. And if Canaris had not once spread the word that Himmler had once been a psalm-reader, it is possible that he would have been pardoned and might have been kept on in the service as a consultant on the English Intelligence Service.

"But you express a rather sharp judgement," smiled Weiss.

"We old Nazis are very bothered by the fact that certain of the high leaders, when negotiating with the English and Americans, agreed to dissolve the National Socialist Party. Even the Fuehrer, who proposed his own conditions for a separate peace to the Western powers through Prince Hohenlohe, didn't go this far. Therefore, we will remain faithful to the Fuehrer to the last. The Party will continue to live as long as the Empire exists!", Hakke announced solemnly.

"But even Himmler has long spoken of the possibility of a military defeat".

"Yes, I know about this. But if we, the old Nazis, can be saved, we will do everything possible to raise the Empire once again from the ashes. And even Dulles himself has insisted that his agent Gisevius be given the post of imperial commissar, with the rights of a minister, for the struggle against chaos and disorder in the new German government simply because he has had the experience of working in the Gestapo."

"This means that all hope is not yet lost?"

"No", said Hakke. "But only that it is very unpleasant to me to see tens of thousands of our people are going underground under more favorable conditions than I. They want to plant me with the communists. And do you know why? So that I, as a member of the Resistance, will be able to confuse the occupation authorities, to provoke them into arrests of those who actually took part in the Resistance movement. And I am already over fifty. I'm not a boy. I haven't the head for this. I haven't the imagination."

"Listen", asked Weiss, "why did you first give the impression that you do not know the ways that we are using to shift to a special position?"

"Why?", growled Hakke. "Because I nevertheless count on occupying the place of one of those who is now going underground. I want my last assignment in the Gestapo to be higher than the one I hold now. I think that I have enough time for this before they throw me too into the underground. And it was of interest to me to check through you how much longer I should remain on the surface. I very much respect your mind, Captain Weiss."

"You're a faker", Johann rebuked him.

"So are you", said Hakke threatening Johann with his finger. You asked all sorts of leading questions although you are far better informed than I."

"A habit", replied Weiss unembarrassed.

"As it should be". Hakke thoughtfully wrinkled his brow. "You are aware that in our service a person can suddenly disappear. Particularly if he knows too much."

Weiss nodded.

"But I have a guarantee. They are here. Hakke pulled aside a curtain and rapped with his knuckles on the door of a fire-proof cabinet. He became silent and looked at Weiss. "You are the only person to whom I can trust my life. Tomorrow Mueller is supposed to call on me. I know what I am doing, but still there is a risk. It will be late then. If he gives me what I want -- and I will demand the rank of a Sturmbanfuehrer -- then everything will be alright. If not, you may consider that Hakke no longer exists. Here is the key. Not earlier than two days from now, take everything out of this cabinet and give it to Schellenberg." He leaned forward and whispered: "Here I have the papers

of Heydrich and among them a copy of the dossier on the Fuehrer himself, as well as dossiers on a number of high-placed leaders of the Empire. Schellenberg will report all this to the Fuehrer but heads will fly, including the head of Mueller."

"You swiped those papers in the Gestapo during a bombing raid?"

"I only saved them", Hakke proudly corrected. "I saved them so that they would not fall into the wrong hands."

"And besides these dossiers, there's nothing in the cabinet?"

"Of course there is", said Hakke. "All sorts of dirt is compressed here. Do you understand how, with its help you can take the leaders of the Empire by the throats?"

Weiss pushed away Hakke's hand, which was squeezing the key.

"There's no cause for your alarm. I am sure that tomorrow you will receive the rank of Sturmbanfuehrer."

And as Hakke did not insist, Weiss did not agree to take the key from him. And when they were parting, Hakke was forced to admit:

"You are a completely honest man, Weiss. Only I don't understand why."

When Johann phoned him the following evening, he heard an authoritative voice:

"Sturmbanfuehrer Hakke here!"

The new Sturmbanfuehrer begged Weiss to visit him again: he wanted to show him his brand new uniform. And wishing to demonstrate to Weiss the unlimited prospects of power which had opened before him, he received him in his offices and, with Weiss present, heard the reports of his subordinates. This gave Johann an opportunity to get a clearer picture of the enormous scale of the preparations being made by high-ranking Gestapo officers to go underground.

And several days later, all the Berlin papers published an obituary on the occasion of the untimely demise of Sturmbanfuehrer Hakke. The funeral was attended by prominent officers of the Empire's secret services. And old Nazis, many of whom wore gold Party decorations, carried the coffin on their shoulders and placed it in the crypt, and covered it with a swastika flag.

Possibly at the same time that the coffin was being placed in the ground, Hake himself, having exchanged his uniform for civilian clothing, was crossing to a neutral country as an ordinary passenger of "Luftthansa". And possibly Hake's body actually lay in the grave. In any case, it was not Mueller's custom to excuse subordinates such indiscretions as that which Hake permitted himself, so resolutely demanding a promotion.

As regards the dossiers saved by Hake, they no longer presented any interest to anyone. Not one of the leaders of the Empire could use this concentration of meanness and loathsomeess to the detriment of others: it was already too late. Only seconds of historical time remained until the time that Soviet artillery was to smash the last, twelfth-hour existence of the fascist Reich.

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The faces of the rank-and-file workers of SD foreign political intelligence had taken on a kind of strange expression: Johann had seen such a wandering look in the eyes of persons whose memories had been dulled by prolonged sickness.

Formerly they all were distinguished by indifference and alienation, a cold, stiff politeness -- all this made it possible, in associating with one another, to avoid conversations of any substance. Now they began to bustle about and, without ceremony and with obvious curiosity, to cross-examine one another about "the news" -- about the daily military reports. And the eyes of each contained barely controlled despair: would they leave him here, at Bismarckstrasse, until the last second before the arrival of the twelfth hour?

On the other hand, the important foreign agents maintained their calm. It was easy for them to do so: they all had prepared comfortable "burrows" for themselves in the Western countries and knew that they could wait in them until the arrival of better times, regularly receiving from the bank the same amounts of money which they had always received in accordance with their services and positions in the intelligence service.

Weiss noticed that almost all the important German residents, coming to Berlin from one or another Western country where they worked devoted very little time to the preparation of reports. For the most part they were busy arranging the affairs of their chiefs. Evidently they had been called upon to provide all necessary comforts for the leaders of German Intelligence when they took up residence in the countries where the residents had already solidly acclimatized themselves.

Schollenberg had left for Sweden.

Gustav called in five young officers, including Weiss, and introduced them to a man with an athletic build, but already growing old, bald, with a face which was scarred and deeply furrowed with wrinkles:

"You can call him Paul."

Now in the mornings the five of them went regularly together with Paul to Grunwald Forest for training. Paul taught them all possible ways to kill a man: they used cold steel and various make-shift devices -- a piece of wire, the neck of a bottle. They also learned to get along with their bare hands alone.

Paul said that, on the order of the Reichsfuehrer, he was also teaching the same methods to the highest-ranking members of the service, but privately in their own homes.

In connection with Schollenberg's absence, Johann had more free time and was able to write a situation report to the Center. Having enciphered it, he sent it to Professor Shtutgof using a secret cache which the two had agreed upon.

Meanwhile, Henrich had determined the points where the secret stores, which were being supplied by Willy Schwartzkopf, were being kept. But when Johann tried to match these points with names on the map, they couldn't be found. Evidently all those names were imaginary or had been encoded and it would be impossible to decode them without the key.

When he heard about this, Henrich became alarmed:

"This means that my uncle doesn't trust me."

"Don't get excited", said Weiss. "Possibly the system of conspiratorial work is such that the location of one or another supply depot is known only to the senior officer of the group which will be based at that particular point."

"This is hardly likely," replied Henrich dubiously. "Then why would Willy keep a map on the inner door of a special, fire-proof cabinet. I once came into his office while he was making notes on this map and he at once slammed the door."

"And what else is in this cabinet?"

"Nothing, only the map. Evidently the cabinet is intended

especially for the storage of secret maps. The office was dark but the map was illuminated by a light located inside the cabinet."

"And your uncle has never opened this cabinet while you were in the room?"

"Never."

"Well then, maybe you're right," replied Johann.

"I understand how important this is!" said Heinrich with fervour. "And I will do everything I can to obtain the map."

"How can you do that?"

Heinrich shrugged his shoulders.

"In the final analysis, he killed my father and sometime he will have to answer for this."

"It's not for you to do."

"Then who?"

"The Soviet people for the murder of a Soviet man."

"And who am I?" asked Heinrich. "A fascist?"

"Now don't get angry." Johann placed a hand on his shoulder. "It isn't necessary, Heinrich. It isn't necessary for you to do this."

"Now?"

"Never."

"What do you mean?" Heinrich was angry and pushed Johann's hand from his shoulder.

"I don't want blood on your hands. I don't want this."

Heinrich wanted to protest but Johann, taking a pencil and paper from his pocket, stopped him:

"You're an engineer, right?"

"Well, almost."

"Look: here's a diagram. When the cabinet is opened, the reflector turns on. The door of the cabinet, pressing on contacts from a wire to a hidden camera activates it automatically, and a photograph is produced."

"Of my uncle's back", Heinrich laughed.

"But, if we suppose that your uncle, at this moment, is not standing at the cabinet?"

"Possible...But I don't understand where the camera should be placed."

"I think..."

"But my uncle opens the cabinet only when he needs to look at the map."

"We already know this. But it is possible to call him away at this moment."

"How can this be done?"

"Very simple: a telephone call."

"But before going to the telephone he will close the door-- and this will finish it. And, besides, how do we know precisely at what moment it is necessary to call him to the telephone?"

"Look here", said Johann. "It is possible to hook up the wire in a system so that, let's say, five seconds after the telephone rings, the shutter of the camera is released."

"And the click of the camera?"

"It can be arranged so that it is covered by a second ring of the telephone. Your uncle, when he hears no voice on the phone, will hang up the receiver and another ring will coincide with the click of the camera."

"Well", Heinrich said uncertainly. "We can try."

"Where do you plan to do this?" asked Johann.

"What do you mean, where? Why, in my uncle's office."

"No", said Weiss. "First you must hook this arrangement up in

your own room and must experiment and check it, taking pictures of the books in your book case. And if, after many tests, it works without failure, only then can you hook up this equipment in your uncle's fire-proof cabinet."

"Nevertheless, I don't understand you." Heinrich's voice betrayed confusion. "Secret stores are being readied; using them, saboteurs will kill your soldiers and officers even after Hitler's Germany ceases to exist. And your attitude to all this is one of strange indifference."

"And what do you think I should do?"

"It is necessary to shoot the sturmbanfuchrer and take the map from him."

"Why?"

"What do you mean, Why?" Heinrich was amazed.

"What good will it do anyone if Willy Swartzkopf is dead? Then the map would be worthless, whether we stole it or only took a photograph of it. The copy of the map is registered in your uncle's name. And, judging from the construction of the cabinet, this is the most secret of all the documents in his possession. This means that, if Willy should die under suspicious circumstances, the stores which are shown on the map would be moved to new bases."

"How about giving my uncle a strong sleeping powder and then secretly taking the key to the cabinet from him while he is passed out?"

"Your uncle is a faithful servant and, once he woke up, would consider it his duty to act in the same way as anyone else who has custody of secret documents would under similar circumstances. He would report immediately to Himmler that, for some unknown reason, he was unconscious for a certain period of time. And this would lead to an investigation."

"Well then," Heinrich agreed with a sigh, "we must give some thought to your plan." And then he added with a burst of temper: "But I'm not sure that it's such an ideal one."

"Well, maybe you can make it perfect and, if you do, I'll give you patent rights to it." And here Johann, embarrassed, became silent, realizing that he had been untautful. He had unintentionally alluded to the past pretensions of Heinrich to the patents which his

father had received for inventions which had been worked out on the basis of the technical ideas of Professor Goldblatt.

But Holnrich either did not pay attention to his words or did not consider it necessary to do so. He was not only a well educated man, but was so sensitive in his relationship with Johann that, even without words, he clearly understood the meaning of the slightest nuance in his mood.

Somewhat the telephone sounded in Johann's room. This was surprising: He himself did not know the number of his telephone end, consequently, nobody could call him. It was possible to use the phone only through an internal switchboard.

Picking up the phone, Johann heard the voice of Lansdorf. The latter asked him to come over for a visit and said that he had already sent a car for Johann.

For a long time, the chauffeur drove the automobile through the outskirts of Berlin, criss-crossing through streets and alleys, and then returned to the region of Wannsee and stopped before a private home, not more than fifteen minutes by foot from Bismarckstrasse.

Lansdorf greeted Weics with friendly informality, as if stressing that his present position as a guest placed them on almost even footing.

He had become even thinner and his face had so dried up that the skin, it seemed, creaked when he, as always, cautiously smiled with his lips alone. But in general appearance, he seemed hale and hardy and his eyes had not lost their cold, experienced expression.

Lansdorf said that the order to take the Abwehr from under the subordination of the General Staff had been long expected. Indeed, the activity of the Abwehr had, in essence, always been under the control of the SD. Himmler's monopoly of power over all the intelligence services only meant that they would be merged into one system.

About himself he noted with a laugh that, recently, he had been engaged in desk work of a scientific nature: he had prepared a report for the Reichsfuehrer in which he set forth the results of his research into the partisan movement and the system of underground organizations in the occupied countries of Europe. And although the materials at Lansdorf's disposal were insufficiently complete, he had nevertheless come to the conclusion that the most advanced organization had been achieved by the Soviet partisans who operated in occupied regions.

Closing his taut, white eye-lids, Lansdorf moved his lips and again began to speak in a bored tone:

"But, unfortunately, those for whom my report was intended, even now, during these tragic days for Germany, are still so under the influence of Prussian self-confidence that they have taken a cautious view of the high evaluation which I gave to the Russians with regard to this type of activity. I must admit, however, that in all probability, this evaluation is unacceptable for us. And not because of some special characteristic of their technique of organization. But mainly because the Russians base it on the sympathy of the population of the occupied regions. They do not count so much on professionally trained people as on the broad masses of the population. More suitable for us are various forms of conspiratorial organizations, operating in the strictest isolation from the German population, on whose support we can hardly count at the present time.

"In 1918, I commanded underground sabotage groups consisting mainly of officers. And when the troops of the Western powers occupied Germany, we were successful in terrorizing and impressing them with excellently organized terrorist acts. This experience, doubtlessly, is also acceptable under modern conditions and, particularly, I suppose, in the eastern part of our country, which will first be occupied by the Soviet Army.

"As regards other forms, we will stick to systems of strictly decentralized sabotage groups, scattered throughout all of Germany.

"We cannot count on the Party apparatus and its functionaries since Martin Bormann has worked out his own, special plan for moving this contingent underground. The Functionaries will take up the guise of those who have suffered from fascism and after a long cooling-off period, will secretly begin to act in the sphere of politics, striving to resurrect the Nazi Party under one name or another. Possibly for this purpose they will be directed to penetrate a certain newly-established democratic organization so that later they can take complete control of it.

"In a word, we are now engaged here with something which we once engaged in in the "Vali Staff", only we are not training prisoners of war, but Germans, mainly from units of the SS. Special schools, the "Adolph Hitler Schulen", have been established for young people. Incidentally, I don't think that it's a bad thing that we have located these schools at ancient castles and have reconstituted the medieval rituals of initiating members into secret orders. Various mystical accessories, oaths of allegiance in lantern light, the voice from the grave giving notification that the members of the organization will punish treason by executing all the relatives of the traitor, initiation tests -- all this is extremely useful since it excites the imagination of youth."

Weiss listened and tried to understand the purpose of this long lecture and what relation it had to him personally.

"In addition," Lansdorf continued in his dull voice, "the Gestapo is sending to the Adolph Hitler Schullen" people who are subject to exemption. And the students practice on real subjects rather than hypothetical ones in interrogations using various means of pressure. And they let some of these people provided by the Gestapo go into the park, seemingly for a stroll, and one or another of the students independently settles accounts with him -- quickly and quietly, but in such a way that the corpse inspires horror.

"And, you know, these are very young people -- from 16 years -- they are doing extremely well.

"By the way, Fraulein Angelica Buecher, your friend, has been entered in this school at her request. And although Angelica -- between the two of us, of course -- is a hysterical woman, she already stands at the head of the five women there. They have given them permission to practice on prisoners of war, working on farms in the area. And, imagine, she is so energetic that the farmers will soon be without working hands. I hope they will be equally successful when Germany is subjected to occupation; indeed, their present actions with regard to the prisoners of war will obligate them in the future to act in just the same way with Germans who wish to collaborate with the occupation authorities." Closing his eyes, he continued dreamily: "The Fuehrer, they tell me, is extremely pleased with our students. He said: 'My Ordensburgs are training youth from which the world will recoil in fear; violently active, powerful, cheerless, cruel youth -- this is what I need!'"

Lansdorf became silent, opened his eyes part way, and looking sharply at Weiss, remarked:

"Naturally the students of the higher schools are selected only from the staffs of the SS and the Gestapo. They must be unqualified masters. And when the Soviet Army changes from an active force into a mere army of occupation and its officers and soldiers begin to treat the German population with the simple-heartedness and good will which are characteristic of the Bolsheviks, convinced that class sympathies are stronger than national antipathies -- then our scattered army will gather and begin to arm, instilling a hatred of the Germans in the Soviet troops. Naturally, the Soviet commanders will take appropriate steps. But none of our people will suffer: a special agent network will pass the Soviet occupation authorities a massive list of Germans allegedly taking part in the crimes. And to the terror of the Reds we will reply with our own, even stronger, black terror."

With a forced, cheerless expression on his face, Weiss asked:

"Personally, you tell all this with such absorption that I wondered whether you did not want to make me your collaborator once again."

"Yes," said Lansdorf, "Precisely. I value your experience in the Abwehr."

"But I am not planning to change my position. In addition, it seems to me" -- in any case, Johann decided to brag -- "that I enjoy the favor of Schellenberg and ..."

"I know all about this", interrupted Lansdorf. "But I am able to convince Schellenberg that your service with us is more expedient."

"Good. I will think it over."

"How long?"

"That will depend on you," Johann said with undue familiarity.

Lansdorf furrowed his brow in puzzlement.

"Since I have not been deprived of the right of choice, I would like to learn a little more specifically what it is that you are proposing. If this is possible, of course."

"I will give the order to Major Dietrich and he, within appropriate limits of course, will familiarize you with the area of our work which we are offering you."

"Is Dietrich here!" exclaimed Johann. "And already a Major. I would like to congratulate him."

"You will be able to do so at once." Lansdorf pressed a button and told the duty officer to call for Major Dietrich.

Johann was not glad, but merely happy that Dietrich turned out to be here. He knew how he should conduct himself with Dietrich and that the latter was obligated to him.

And when Dietrich came in, Johann smiled widely, but his glance kept its stiff, inflexible exactingness.

Having led Weiss to his office, Dietrich sat down next to him on the couch and said happily, but with a certain amount of disappointment:

"We heard rumors that you had been hanged."

"Not me, but on me," corrected Weiss and, with his eyes, indicated the iron cross decorating his blouse.

"Congratulations," Dietrich replied in a bored voice.

"You already have experience", Weiss said in a friendly voice, "and you know that I know how to keep the secret of your crimes like the very greatest of values."

"I don't understand your joking tone!" Dietrich replied indignantly.

"Never mind", said Weiss. "I simply want you to understand that in my eyes all this has no special significance and, as a matter of fact, in general terms it doesn't even appear so scandalous. Is this not correct? At the present time people who are somewhat more important than you or I are ready to do the devil knows what just as long as they can save their own skins. But you and I, no matter where we may be are ready to give our lives for the Fuehrer, right? And in the skins of "werewolves" we will continue the struggle, while our chiefs have been safely evacuated to Spain, Argentina, Switzerland, and Mexico; it is even possible that they will be given refuge in the U.S., is it not? And at the same time you and I will fight like lone wolves."

"Yes," Dietrich agreed despondently. "This is possible." and brightening up, he suddenly asked: "You it seems have been a 'gold courier'? You transported valuables to Swiss banks, ensuring the well-being and prosperity of the highly-placed workers of the Reich during their future emigration?"

Johann, without answering his question, remarked sympathetically:

"When the Soviet Army penetrated into Eastern Prussia I thought about you Major Dietrich. Do not your relatives live there. You have lost your property. This is terrible!"

Dietrich sadly shrugged his shoulders.

"Yes," he confirmed. "Besides my officer's pension, I have nothing to look forward to in the future."

"And who will give you this pension?"

"What do you mean, who?" Dietrich said with surprise. "As long as there's some kind of government in Germany, it will not remain

indifferent to the fate of the officers who have defended the Reich on the field of battle."

"If I may," interrupted Weiss. "You and I are not officers of the Wehrmacht. Membership in our type of service will hardly evoke a desire to support us on the part of the new government of Germany."

"I don't know." Dietrich waved his arms distractedly. "I am simply in despair. If we were not in the zone of Soviet occupation, then I would have some kind of hope." He became silent, and then asked: "So you really want to abandon Schellenberg and return to Lansdorf?" He sighed. Undoubtedly the personnel of foreign intelligence will be better off than we, both materially and with regard to safety."

"Of course," said Weiss, "we will receive pensions from the special SD funds which are kept in the banks of the neutral countries. Moreover, our colleagues from the US will most probably become interested in us and, hoping to make use of our experience, will show care that we do not experience hardships. It is evident that soon all the troops will be shifted from the western front to the East and this will immediately create an atmosphere of sympathy and even trust in us in the West--under conditions, it stands to reason, of full contact in our activities."

"Oh, I know all this!" Dietrich frowned with vexation. "Even in the Army they are openly speaking about the transfer of troops. But I cannot abandon Lansdorf. To stay with him means to be turned into a knight of the black cloak and dagger. And I am not fifteen years old like these youth from the "Adolph Hitler Schullen". He laid his hand on the hand of Weiss. "I would be a happy man if I could change places with you. All the more so as I excellently know Western Europe and, doubtlessly, would be useful to Schellenberg."

"Well," Weiss shrugged his shoulders, "we have more than enough West European specialists. But there's the Soviet Union..."

"Are you crazy?", Dietrich interrupted hotly, "I would rather shoot myself."

"Perhaps the East European countries? We are leaving a large agent network there."

"But there, there is revolutionary upheaval everywhere," Dietrich remarked with disgust. "When I was still a cadet I visited those countries, but then everything was almost decent in them. You know, Johann, I am prepared for a most modest existence, but in a country where the leaders rule the people, not where the people govern the country. I will always find a common tongue with the people of any nation who occupy such a position as I. Both my upbringing and my way of thought unites me with them."

"O.K." promised Weiss, if it seems possible I will try to do something for you. And meanwhile, let's take up Landsdorf's proposal. Try to entice me with your sphere of activity. If you are successful in doing so it's just possible that I will change places with you."

He declaimed pathetically: "In the final analysis, it may be that, more than anything else, I want to die for the Fuehrer on the territory of the Reich, rather than live as an emigrant, for example, in South America, where some of our people hope to be." And he added cynically: "Well, let's begin to trade: what do you offer me?"

"district, an inspectorate (inspecktsiya)."

"So that I can hide during the bombing raids?"

"There won't be any: the locations of schools are outside the target areas of bombers."

"Show me!"

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"Get a map."

"But it's top secret."

"To hell with it. Then -- a list. I know Germany and can find them even without a map."

"But this is impossible for the very same reason."

"Oh?" Weiss stood up. "Then I wish you success in your endeavor."

"Wait, wait," already giving up, Dietrich stopped him. "Very well, I'll show you the list of schools." He opened the fire-proof cabinet and took out several sheets of cigarette paper, which were sticky to the fingers.

Weiga road:

- 1) Order castle (Ordensburg) "Sontlofe" in the Allgau (Bavaria).
- 2) Order castle "Buelow" (Pomerania).
- 3) Order castle "Vogelsang" near Gemund (Eifel).
- 4) "Potterbrut" castle, near Sankt-Pelten (Austria).
- 5) Academy of Youth Leaders in Braunschweig.
- 6) Party Workers' School in Salzburg.
- 7) " " in Grize.
- 8) Order castle "Kressinsee" near Falkenburg (East Prussia).

Weiss slowly lit a cigarette, inhaled deeply and, as if deflating in the cigarette, leaned back on the couch. He was now laboring slightly, using all his concentration to memorize the names of the schools. And he carelessly returned the list to Dietrich after he was sure that they had been firmly etched in his mind. Incidentally, earlier, when he was collecting books for Schellenberg, he had suggested that certain of those order castles could be used as bases for secret fascist organizations.

"Between us," said Weiss, "we have more detailed information about your deployment at Bismarckstrasse. I am greatly sorry, Dietrich, but you evidently take me for a Wehrmacht officer. Do you really not understand that we, the workers of the SD Sixth Department, possess incomparably better information about the aims and efforts of the Fuehrer than you do." He declared firmly: "I must have solid guarantees, must be sure that you have not thrown yourselves into a desperate adventure but are engaged in a sufficiently well thought-out and ensured matter, upon which the future of the new great Germany may depend." He added more softly: "Even though it may be clear to you, you must convince me so that I have no doubts of the immortality of the thousand-year Reich."

"Weiss," Dietrich said humbly, "but, please, not today."

"Why? You must understand my firmness. Now, when the fate of Germany is being decided, each of us is also deciding our own fate. It is possible that, when I return to Bismarckstrasse, I will receive an assignment and, no matter how sudden it may seem, will find myself the day after tomorrow in a country where I least expect to be. And I will stay there for a long time. Therefore, before leaving you, I will bid farewell, perhaps forever."

"Very well, Johann," said Dietrich. "We will talk, but now I must take some papers from my safe to the personal cafe of Landsdorf. You won't mind waiting?"

"At your service," said Weiss.

Having opened the door of the safe, Dietrich slowly began to take out file folders. From time to time he opened one of them and reread the papers in it.

Weiss went up to him and stood nearby. Without hurrying and seeming not to notice him, Dietrich continued his work.

This didn't last very long. Having closed the door of the safe, Dietrich turned to Weiss.

"So you are still waiting? Do you want me to offer you

something more?"

Weiss held out his hand to him.

"Thank you, Dietrich. You are right it seems: you are going to be busy for quite a while. I will phone you tomorrow." -- And he quickly left the room.

Johann walked along the street, unconscious of his surroundings and of himself. He was tight and tense all over. This was inhuman work, the most real kind of mental torture. It was necessary for him to recreate in his mind the contents of the papers through which Dietrich had been leafing.

Johann entered a cafe, sat at a corner table, took a newspaper from his pocket and, glancing at the waiter with intoxicated eyes, blurted:

"Good!" Then, as if waking up, added sluggishly: "Mineral water."

And when the waiter brought his order, Johann merely waved his hand, continuing to make some sort of notes on the pages of the Voelkischer Beobachter which he seemed to be reading with intense interest. Then, having finished his water, he left a large tip and went out, taking the paper with him.

He appeared in the masseur's shop at the set time. He called for professor Shtutgoff, and when the latter came to his booth, began to complain about the clumsiness of the masseur. The professor begged him to calm himself and invited him to come to his office. Weiss, wrapped in a towel, holding the same newspaper in his hand, followed the professor. Without giving him an opportunity to express his concern for such rude violation of the rules of conspiracy, he ordered -- yes, in fact ordered -- him to take some paper and note down what he had to say.

Wrapped in a towel, he sat in an easy chair with closed eyes and, shaking like a maniac, dictated and dictated to the professor, only infrequently glancing at the notes made in the paper.

When Johann finished dictating, his emaciated face was covered with sweat.

The professor gave him some sort of mixture to drink and said:

"I will now take you back to your booth. Lie down on the couch and sleep. Sleep no matter what. Your brain is unbelievably over-tired and you need a deep sleep; otherwise such a strain will be harmful."

He took Johann by the shoulders, drew him to himself and kissed him on the brow: "Good boy." He carefully led him along the corridor, closed the door of the booth, and hung a "do not disturb" sign on the door.

As directed, Weiss reported to Gustav about meetings with his former fellow Abwehr employees. The latter remarked with a laugh:

"Admiral Canaris wanted to tie up to the coats of England and it's not surprising that a member of his command also experiences an attraction to this country."

"Johann knew of Dietrich's craftiness. More than likely he had already reported to Lansdorf that he had acquainted Weiss with certain secret information. Therefore, Weiss took the precaution of saying to Gustav:

"Major Dietrich, when trying to make me his co-worker again, decided to boast about the goods in his shop."

"What do you mean?", asked Gustav.

"They have thought up the slogan: 'Hatred is our commandment, Vengeance is our battle cry', and they are gathering young people under this banner. This type of business does not attract me."

"Nevertheless, don't lose contact with your former co-workers", advised Gustav. He added impressively: "the Reichsfuehrer did not like Canaris and, having taken the admiral's command into his own hands, is hardly likely to trust his people."

"Yes sir," said Weiss.

The very same day, Lansdorf again invited Weiss to call.

But this time he was in a bad humor and was extremely irritated. He paced the floor and then suddenly stopped and, stamping his foot, asked:

"Do you know what took place in this house on 20 January 1942?"

Weiss shook his head.

"The representatives of the highest organs of power accepted and approved Hitler's plan for exterminating the Jews here. Precise figures were established for every European country, totalling more than eleven million people. But as early as 1933, Greifelt, Eichman, and Globke were directing the mass destruction of the Jewish people."

With a searching look at Lansdorf, Weiss calmly said:

"At the Yalta Conference, the government heads of our enemies accepted the obligation to punish war criminals."

"Precisely. You have correctly understood me," said Lansdorf.

Weiss screwed up his eyes and remarked:

"But I was not in this house then and I do not live in it now."

Lansdorf replied:

"You are frequently seen on Herrngasse street in Bern. Is this not the location of the residence of the OSS chief there, Allen Welsh Dulles?"

"Possibly, agents of English Intelligence have surveilled me," grinned Weiss.

Apparently not hearing, Lansdorf continued thoughtfully:

"Formerly, Dulles frequently came to Berlin and I once was acquainted with him. In 1933 I even had a long intimate conversation with him when the Fuehrer invited him to dinner. Dulles' law office represented the interests of the largest German monopolies in the US and it is possible that, even now as formerly, he represents their interests." He moved his lips. "After this war, Great Britain will not return to its former position of power. She will be transformed into a partner of the US, a partner which they won't take into account."

"Possibly," agreed Weiss, wondering what Lansdorf, the friend and confidant of Camaris, was leading up to. Doubtlessly such a sudden and obvious reorientation toward the US was explained by fear: Lansdorf was afraid of being included among the war criminals.

Lansdorf's voice sounded harsh, even threatening:

"Dietrich has reported to me that you took advantage of his negligence and showed a rather suspicious interest in certain secret documents. According to instructions, I must report this."

"Don't worry," grinned Weiss. "I have already reported this myself to my leaders."

"For what purpose?"

"But, of course, I also know this instruction and therefore

acted on its basis."

Lansdorf looked at him with interest.

"You have learned a thing or two, Weiss."

"Under your direction," Weiss admitted modestly, and added reproachfully: "Only it's unnecessary for you to attempt blackmail me into something. I will never forget that I am obligated to you. And I am prepared to be at your service."

"You are right, Weiss," sighed Lansdorf. "You are a direct man. And in dealing you, the same principle should be adhered to."

Weiss stood up, bowed, and placed his hand over his heart.

"So," said Lansdorf. "There is one special assignment among the general ones which will be given in the future to our terrorist groups. By the way, legally we would like to consider these as partisan groups. We must presume that, with the advance of the enemy, the administration of the concentration camps will probably not have time to evacuate or even to exterminate the prisoners. In these cases, the terrorist groups are being given the task to destroy all the prisoners down to the last one and to burn and blow up all the special equipment which you may imagine exists in the camps."

Weiss sucked in his breath.

"Now, it seems, I'm beginning to understand. Therefore, your "Partisan" activities will be stripped of any pretense of patriotism, heroism, and the like. And with defeat, every terrorist will kill defenseless people like common murderers. And all Germans, even those which formerly sympathized with you will turn from you with disgust."

"Yes," agreed Lansdorf, "You have understood me correctly." He announced proudly: "I am ready to die with honor as a soldier of the German resistance. But I have one weakness: I would like my name to go down in history."

"And what can I do for you?" Weiss said in a business-like way.

Again silent, Lansdorf crossed the room and, opening the fire-proof cabinet, took out a sealed envelope and gave it to Weiss. On the envelope was written: 'Munchen, Albert von Lansdorf'. Johann, puzzled, raised his eyes.

"The letter is addressed to my brother," explained Lanzdorf. "In it, I have expressed some of my thoughts. And I wish to transmit this letter through you."

"But I don't know whether I'll get a chance to be in Munich."

"I figure", Lanzdorf interrupted him, "that you will have another opportunity to visit Bern. And if, in some way, my letter accidentally fell into the hands of Dulles, I wouldn't blame you. Is all this clear?"

"Yes", said Weiss. "But before accepting such a touchy assignment, I must know, even if in the most general terms, what is in the letter."

"Oh, don't worry!", Lanzdorf assured him. "It contains no military or state secrets. Something like diary entries, in which I express myself as being opposed to the liquidation of the prisoners in the concentration camps, since I consider this inhuman."

"You're a good-hearted man!" exclaimed Weiss. "And what perspicacity!"

"In any case, the Americans can be sure that I will take every possible measure to see that the groups under my command do not carry out such acts in concentration camps which are located in the Western part of Germany."

"And what about the East?"

"It is sufficient", Lanzdorf frowned, "that I will save those who, in the face of the Western powers, I consider it expedient to save."

"Does this mean that all prisoners will be killed in the Eastern part of the Reich?"

"I suppose," Lanzdorf replied in a low voice, "that the camp administration will cope with this with, of course, the assistance of units of the Wehrmacht or with the help of SS units specially assigned for this. By the way, since we now have a common leadership, you and Major Dietrich are being assigned to a short -- only two days -- but extremely painstaking period of headquarters office work. It is necessary to verify that the documents are in order for those who, for motives which you understand, are now being sent to the concentration camps. This is being done under the guise of a transfer from one camp to another in order to maintain, so to say, a long period of imprisonment. You have experience in the Abwehr and know all the niceties of this business. You can begin at once."

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Dietrich, as Weiss was well aware from the past, was in the habit of letting others do all the work and ascribe to himself their successes. He lacked even the most elementary knowledge of camp record keeping, even though he claimed to be a specialist in that field. For this reason, he was quite happy with Weiss's arrival.

Special "files" were not opened for the new "inmates." All that was done was change the photographs of the "files" of those killed, putting in their place new ones pretreated chemically, to make them look old. All these "files" included a note to the effect that the inmates were to be subjected to the "special treatment," i.e., that they had to be killed.

Each "file" had to include a copy of the Gestapo file which described the type of "crime" for which the inmate was to be executed.

A rubber stamp was used for the signature of the Reichsführer. Another rubber stamp on the file marked that the inmate could not be executed without special Gestapo order.

A fine arrow with feathers finely drawn on the top, at the lower left corner of the card confirmed the signature.

In the secret service offices, this sign was usually placed before the birth date; the arrow pointed downwards before the date of death. If no date was marked, the arrow meant one thing only -- the inmate had to die. It is precisely that sign that Johann put, looking at the documents, and seeing to it that everything in them was strictly according to regulations.

Dietrich did not even dream of checking his work.

According to instructions, a small red paper triangle had to be attached to the needle, on both sides, of the file. Dietrich considered this pure red tape. Yet, Johann knew that each detail in the making the "file" had its special significance. That is why he cut out black paper triangles and pushed the box to Dietrich. The latter continued mechanically to add them to the files, preferring to work with paper clips rather than check the files. The clipped black pieces of paper usually meant that no rations were to be allocated to the inmate by the camp administration which could, in other words, "check him out" the moment he arrived in the camp.

In the course of their work together, Dietrich told Weiss a great deal of interesting news. For example, he told him that all the personnel of the Abwehr workshops, previously

engaged in forging Soviet documents, were now forging German documents. In expectation of better times, many members of the secret services were now becoming peasants, craftsmen or merchants. Some of them were even being supplied with documents showing that these people had been taken prisoners and released by the Soviet command especially for propaganda work among the population. The owners of such documents had to show them to the German population and ask for shelter. If such was granted, they were ordered personally to deal with the entire families of those who had sheltered them. Furthermore, it was the duty of such people to expose the German prisoners of war who had been truly released by the Soviet command to promote resistance to fascism.

Dietrich asked Weiss whether any one of the heads of the secret service abroad had talked to him.

Weiss said yes, having indeed spoken with Gustav about Dietrich.

Dietrich said longingly:

"I would have very much liked to be in Spain now: Franco could not forget the services we rendered him in suppressing the revolution. I think that Spain will become the most hospitable country for the Germans."

Reporting to Gustav on the completion of the work which he did on Lansdorf's orders, Weiss deemed it necessary to complain of Dietrich: he said that, in his opinion, the latter was inadequately familiar with the processing of this type documents and that he could allow errors in this work which was urgent and yet required exceptional attention.

Gustav calmed Weiss:

"Forget it! Even if a few SS are liquidated by mistake, the loss won't be great."

In the days that followed, Weiss and Dietrich visited the assembly points of youth assigned to the "Werewolf" units. Despite the knives which hung on the belts of many of the children, they were quite a sorry sight. Almost all "draftees" were drunk: there was no restriction on the schnapps they were being issued.

Noticing a button which had been sewn up on the cheek of one of the children, Weiss asked him the reason. The eyes of the youngster were red, his lips trembled with pain, but he said proudly:

"I have passed the highest test of devotion to the Führer!" Afraid to touch the red, swollen cheek, he only pointed at it with his finger. "I could have eaten a rat like the others. However, I preferred this." He added confidentially: "We volunteered for the trial. Those who were afraid of it become our servants and we whip them if they do not obey us."

"Who is 'we'?" asked Weiss.

"Those who have become knights after the trials."

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Germany was convulsing as though suffering from typhoid fever. The retreating German army was taking with it many people who had once left the western territories to avoid aerial bombardments.

Thousands of soldiers, workers in the past, were being withdrawn from the front and sent to the military plants. A few weeks later, they were sent back to the front lines.

Military units were being transferred from the western front to the eastern. People whose homes had been destroyed from bombings were being taken by Nazi officials to the villages and forced to work for the farmers for their food alone.

Those who were of no value to the state and had no valuables to sell and buy food on the black market were being shipped out of the cities. Round-ups were being conducted for those hundreds of thousands of impoverished and homeless families: the total mobilization carried out by the lower ranks of the Wehrmacht recruited all men up to 60 years of age. Adolescents were being taken too, and assigned to "Werewolf" units.

Nothing could break, disturb the accurate movement of gigantic bureaucratic machine of Nazi Germany. In whatever estate a man might have been, wherever he could have found himself, he was immediately watched, classified, and his will and thinking were coerced. The ubiquitous police system reached the people everywhere, under different forms.

Once, in one of Berlin's suburbs, Johann saw Mrs. Dittmar. She was standing in line, waiting for water. He did not recognize her immediately. Mrs. Dittmar had quite changed in the course of all these years: she had become thin, aged, stooped. She was very happy to see him and invited him to

visit her very modest home. She complained that the landlady treated her and her son Friedrich as though they were members of the occupation forces.

During the bombing of Peenemunde, Friedrich had lost both legs. He was sent to a hospital in Berlin. Released, as an invalid, he was given the right to live in someone else's premises. It was true that the room was no bigger than a pantry. However, the landlords hated him for this intrusion. They also hated him because, even though an invalid, he had remained alive. Their sons had died at the front.

Johann followed Mrs. Ditmar to her room. Everything here was adapted for the use of a legless man: there was a low table, with cut down legs, and similar chairs.

Friedrich did not welcome Weiss's visit, even though once they had corresponded.

Standing up, he hardly reached Weiss's waist. His face was drawn and pale. Obviously, he never left this dark pantry, he sat here as though in exile.

Mrs. Ditmar was obviously impressed with Weiss's officer uniform. She behaved quite subserviently, not even daring to remind Johann that once he had been her tenant.

Johann did not stay long. He took down the address and rapidly left. That same day, he tried, with Franz's help to move Mrs. Ditmar to one of the better apartments abandoned by their owners and which SD agents kept for their own purposes.

The apartment was big, comfortable, well furnished. There were lots of clothes in the closets, stocks of canned goods and wine were stored in the kitchen.

Friedrich thawed out somewhat and told Johann something about himself. He said that the enemy aircraft would have never found their site if the "tracks" of the launching pad of the missile had not been left visible on the sand pile.

"Such 'tracks' were left on purpose by the Russian prisoners of war whose duties were to eliminate all traces of equipment after the firing. That day there was a heavy shower and the security guards did not check. All those who remained alive after the bombing were then hanged," Friedrich said looking at Johann challengingly. "From the point of view of the Russians, that was an exploit."

In turn, Johann looked deeply at him.

"Well, that is a fact."

After that, Friedrich completely loosened up and described Johann his work in Peenemunde. Finally, he said thoughtfully:

"Actually, we are murderers. Our flying missiles are aimed at killing the population and not the armies of the enemy." He looked at his stumps and mumbled: "Only when my head came closer to the earth I began thinking that the earth is not a gigantic tomb carrying in its trip in space all previous human generations who have died at war but the starry cradle of generations which will follow us and which will forever say 'no' to war."

"Why after us?" Johann asked. "I hope that this will happen not so far in the future."

"You are a dreamer," smiled Friedrich with his lips only.

There was a shortage of uniforms for the Folksturm. They were dressed in old uniforms of the postal service, the railroad workers, the underground and streetcar conductors, or the uniforms of petty ministerial workers which had been once contributed to the winter aid campaign. Folksturm units marched along the streets in their rubbers. This was the march of beaten ghosts as though mocking the past power of the Third Reich.

Sending them to their deaths, Goebbels yelled from all the loudspeakers:

"The German dreamer must awaken from his sleep unless he wants to lose his life together with his freedom."

SS troops, accompanied by sheep dogs, convoyed, as though prisoners, the columns of the Folksturm to the railroad trains.

Goebbels shrieked on the loudspeakers set up among the ruins of the railroad station:

"A fourteen-year-old armed with anti-armor weapons watching and resisting the enemy is now more valuable to the nation than dozens of "wise men" who are attempting to prove that our chances have gone down to zero."

"The Gestapo caught such "wise men" hanging them on the first pole available, even though they might have been war invalids who had suffered the irresistible blows of the advancing Soviet army.

"The final triumph will be ours," Goebbels continued, "we will reach this hour at the price of tears and blood. However, it will reward us for our sacrifices... The outcome of this war will be decided one second before the clock strikes midnight."

"Billions of Germans will engage in partisan warfare," proclaimed the loudspeakers speaking as judges solemnly declaring death sentence. The broadcasts were made by the famous Berlin radio announcer Gegenhelm and there was no way to escape his velvety voice:

"Each one of us, dying, will try to take with him to the grave five or ten of the enemy..."

In the past, with his feminine appearance and manly voice, Gegenhelm had been Roem's lover. After Roem's execution, he was sent to concentration camp but for women, not for men, to make his punishment worse.

They remembered Gegenhelm when his resonant voice, as though coming from a sewage pipe, became necessary. With his other world baritone voice, he blessed to death the old and the adolescents who made up the Folksturm battalions.

From the drowning ship of the Third Reich, the people were being thrown into the gulf of war the way, in ancient times, the slaves were being thrown into the sea from boats pursued by anti-slavery countries.

Those were the convulsions of the Third Reich. Fascism had put under arms those Germans who, because of their old or young age, were unable to fill in the rarefied ranks of the Wehrmacht: the Folksturm units were no more than a weak stop-gap for the retreating armies. Dying, those weak old men and undeveloped youngsters, were unaware that the Führer would say of them, with hatred and scorn: "If the German people turned out to be so cowardly and weak, they deserve nothing but shameful death... There is no need to pay attention to retaining the foundations of the life of the people. On the contrary, the best thing would be to destroy those very foundations."

" There was practically no anti-aircraft defense. Aviation, anti-aircraft artillery and the observer corps were bent to the eastern front. The "flying fortresses" of the Americans, and the "Halifax" and "Lancaster" aircraft of the English dropped their deadly loads almost unopposed on the German cities. Emergency units and fire fighters had been already sent to the eastern front.

Moving along the bombed streets of Berlin, Johann saw again & again how Soviet prisoners of war, working amidst smoke and fire, were rescuing children, women and old men from under the ruins.

Pitch black, these people carefully carried in their arms the children wounded or injured in the destructions, as though they were the most valuable thing on earth. The children clung to the necks of their rescuers as though there was no one closer to them in the world, as though only these people could have protected them from the horrors and the suffering.

Once, stopping his car at a semi-destroyed house, Johann saw a weeping woman whose burned-out hair was falling off her head as though ashes. She stretched to the prisoners her burned-out hands and shrieked:

"When is your army coming? When? I wish to God it would come sooner!"

One of the prisoners calmed her in German:

"Yes, they will be here soon..." He turned to his own people and said in Russian:

"Did you hear? It turns out that we are responsible..."

"I do not understand!" exclaimed the woman.

The prisoner said in German:

"Don't yell, lady, you see that we are busy."

Through her sobbing, the woman murmured:

"Why are you rescuing us?"

"You are people and we are people!" said the prisoner of war.

"And then, you will send all of us to Siberia?"

The prisoner's face, shining from the fire, lit into a smile.

"No," said he. "No. You have your home and your land. We have our home and our land. That is all. We are not fascists..."

Henrich managed to photograph the map which Willi Schwartzkopf had. Giving the photograph to Johann, he said:

"I thought of another plan to photograph this. Quite original. I succeeded."

"Very well!" approved Johann. He added: "This is probably inherited: an inventor like your father."

"What do you think," Henrich asked. "If my father would have remained alive, what would he have said at my becoming a Soviet agent?"

"He would have worried like my father," sadly said Johann. "And he would have been proud of his son the way my father is." He promised: "I will absolutely have you meet my father."

Yet, when Johann gave the professor the photographed map, it turned out that the names of the points where the secret bases for terrorist groups were located did not coincide with the data taken from the documents which Dietrich kept. Johann said, confused:

"So, either the map is coded or the documents are. Perhaps both. And without the key, all this is for nothing."

"You are only half correct," smiled the professor. "The documents which Dietrich showed you are indeed in code and that is why he let you look at them. The map, however, is the key to the code. Never mind, our specialists will find it out," he said consolingly. "They have solved worse puzzles. Everything is all right." He put his hand on the photograph of the map and remained silent, thinking. "In fact, all this means that the act of terrorism which the fascists intended to carry out, will be prevented. We will save the lives of many of our soldiers and officers and of an even greater number of Germans -- those who will build a new Germany. So that you may consider that you and your friend, Henrich Schwartzkopf, have already done some

"Work for the future of the German people. By the way, don't you think it necessary to submit the name of Comrade Schwartzkopf for a government award?"

Johann beamed.

"Code the message," said the doctor business-like. "It will be delivered."

For several days on end, Berlin was under the constant bombardment of the allied air force. Returning in his car, during one of these terrible nights, back home on Bismarkstrasse, Johann saw Zubov. He walked slowly along the street, obviously going to the place where the secret service was located. That was an inadmissible violation of conspiracy rules! Zubov had no right to show up not only along this, but even the neighboring, streets.

Johann slowed down the car and, coming up to Zubov's level, opened the car door.

"Come in!"

Without any greeting, Zubov obediently got in the car.

Johann accelerated, trying to leave this area as soon as possible. He was silent but was shaking with anger. Zubov suddenly said:

"Where are you going? Turn toward my place!" He demanded: "Faster!" Then, he waved his hand. "Everything is all the same now... There is nowhere to go."

"Are you drunk?" Johann asked through his teeth. "You smell of alcohol."

"Perhaps," Zubov agreed.

"So, are you drunk?"

"I wished I were, I couldn't."

"What's the matter with you?"

"Brigitta ..." Zubov had a hard time speaking. "For two days she was alive, and then she died. Died entirely, do you understand? She is no more. I stayed with her for a whole day.

"Now, I can no longer stay there. Yet, I could..." He whispered: "Yet, you know, she was not the only one to die. She died with the baby. In another two months, we would have had a son or a daughter. She was worried less that she was dying than that the child would die. You understand, she very much wanted to remain alive, to give birth. I ordered her: do not go in the street without me. She said: 'I must walk.' Then the splinter fell -- as though cut like a safety razor. The doctor pulled it out and threw it away."

They had reached Zubov's apartment.

In the first room, Brigitte was lying in a shroud, on the table.

Zubov whispered:

"Listen, why can't we straighten her out and then take her?"

"Where?"

"Back home... You understand, I have been thinking and thinking how to do it. Don't you think it's possible?"

Zubov's face was pale. Weiss decided on something very risky: he rang up Professor Schtuthoff and asked him to come right away.

The professor's severe face softened when he saw Zubov. He sat down and carefully, without interrupting, listened to what Zubov mumbled, and agreed with everything. Then, he took a syringe and gave Zubov an injection in the hand. Zubov seemed hardly to have noticed it. However, gradually his eyes became sleepy, his eyelids closed and his head bent down.

The professor asked Weiss to help him move the sleeping Zubov on the couch and said:

"If deep sleep is no help and he is unable to get hold of himself, you must take him away somewhere. Even better, tell him that he will betray all of us."

The next morning, when Weiss told Zubov this, Zubov only nodded in answer.

He was able to withstand the entire funeral ceremony and then received the sympathy of Brigitte's relatives and friends.

A day later, Weiss visited Zubov again. Judging by the cigarette butts scattered around the table, he had not left his place for long -- he had possibly spent there the entire night and part of the day.

Silently, Zubov stood up, picked up from the floor a traveling bag and said:

"Let us go."

"Where?"

"I am never coming back here," Zubov declared.

"No," objected Weiss. "You must live here."

"Why?"

"This is an order." More softly, Weiss added: "We all need this, Alesha. We need it; do you understand? For Brigitte's sake too. If you leave her home now, when she has just died, you will insult her memory."

"True," Zubov agreed. "You have hit the nail on the head. I must remain here. True. Now, I will never abandon her until I die. You understand, she knew..."

"What?"

"Not all, naturally, but she knew who I was."

"Why do you think so?" Weiss asked.

"You understand," patiently said Zubov, "I couldn't be sure, but simply sometimes felt it: she knows. Yet, when she was about to die, she asked me to bend close to her and, smiling as though with her entire face, she whispered in Russian: 'Good, thank you, hello!' Then, her eyes suddenly became horribly big and, that was all. Whatever was left of her life went to tell me that she knew. That is all. She lived and she knew." He shook his fist in front of Weiss's face. "Had I known that she knew, you understand, I would have been the happiest man in the world. Yet, I was tortured: I falsified the truth, but I loved her truly. Do you understand?"

"Are you going to her grave?" Weiss asked.

"Yes."

"I will come with you."

"Let us go," Zubov said. He added: "Thank you."

At Brigitte's grave, he asked:

"Would it be possible later to write something in Russian on the memorial stone, that her name was Brigitta Zubova?"

"Absolutely," Weiss agreed. "How else? She was your wife..."

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The past few months, the personnel of Walter Schellenberg's special group on Bismarkstrasse substantially changed. People disappeared without a trace and, just as imperceptibly, new people took their place.

Instead of Gustav, the group was now headed by Alfred Faergof - a lanky thin man, with a narrow mummy-like face with a frozen polite smile.

Faergof was a fellow student of Schellenberg and, sometimes, defended his honor. If someone of the students were to tell him that Schellenberg was an informer and worked for the security service, Faergof would indignantly provoke the student for a duel and would come out the winner. With a sudden stroke of the rapier he would draw blood out of the cheek of his opponent.

After graduation, Faergof opened a lawyer's office in Bonn but failed with his very first client. He did not defend his client but accused him, as though he were the prosecutor. That is what happened on the next occasion as well. It was not by accident. Faergof wanted to dominate over people yet the profession of lawyer placed him in the position of a man dodging the power of the state laws, eluding them. However, he did not dare become prosecutor from fear that one of those he was sentencing might take his revenge. Such cases, as he knew, could take place.

Becoming the chief of the sixth branch of the security service, Walter Schellenberg offered Alfred Faergof a position in the secret investigations unit of the branch.

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The investigation unit received the reports of those who, secretly, checked on the work of the agents and personnel of the foreign intelligence of the sixth branch of the SD. On the basis of those reports, Faergof could sentence any agent. The execution of the sentence was entrusted to special personnel and ways and means were left to their choice.

This already constituted real power over the people, over their lives. It also avoided discussions with the accused and their lawyers.

An rare occasions, a delinquent agent was asked to go to the investigations unit. There was no question of investigating. Faergof met with the agent in one of the comfortable secret premises. He warmly received his guest, and he elegantly and freely talked to him.

Encourging the condemned man to frank talk, Faergof allowed himself statements about the rulers of the Reich for which anyone else would have been hanged without delay. He claimed that the general human norms did not apply to people of their profession. They are aware of all the secret power of the rich and that gives them the right to consider themselves a special class. In their case, there is no burdening moral prejudice, honor or any such inventions used to keep a man in harness.

Having reached his purpose, Faergof thanked the trusting agent for the pleasant talk and firmly shook his hand. While the agent went down the stairs, Faergof went to the window and, during the day, moved down the blinds. At night, he put on the sill a pink shaded lamp.

People who were waiting for the sign met with the agent on the street. All the rest was already their business, extremely specialized.

The essential immorality of Faergof, with which he boasted to himself, was a characteristic shared by all fascist leaders.

Wilhelm Kettl, one of the closest assistants of Walter Schellenberg, having had time to think of the past, in his admissions, publicly made, spoke of one such leader, Heidrich and even though his description of Heidrich included some flattering exaggerations, it still helped understand what he and the other fascist leaders represented.

"He," said Hettl of Heidrich whom he well knew, "was undoubtedly an outstanding personality and a leader not only of national-socialism but the entire concept of the totalitarian state. Historically, he could be compared best to Caesar Borgia.

"Both of them were totally scornful of all moral foundations. Both of them had the same thirst for power, the same type of cold mind and icy heart, and the same type of cold ambition.

"... He not only lacked all Christian moral rules but also an elementary and instinctive feeling of decency. His god was not the state but power -- personal power. He was the type of man out of the times of Caesar, when power as a goal was never questioned and was considered as an end within itself. He did not recognize such a thing as ideology, he did not think of whether it was good or valuable but considered it exclusively as a tool with the help of which he could lead the masses. Everything in him was subordinated to one desire -- to acquire power and use it. Truth and goodness had no real sense for him. They were only tools which could be used for the further assumption of power and any means used toward this goal were just as good.

"Politics was for him also a transitory step to the acquisition and holding of power. Arguments as to whether or not an action was proper by itself seemed to him so foolish that he literally never asked himself such a question.

"Consequently, the entire life of this man consisted of an uninterrupted chain of murders of people whom he hated, murders of competitors for power, murders of enemies and those whom he considered were untrustworthy. Let us add to this an entire chain of intrigues as dirty as murder and frequently planned with an even greater evil."

"Human life had no price whatsoever in Heidrich's eyes and, if anyone stood in his way to power, he mercilessly destroyed him. He strived for power for his own sake. He strived to satisfy only his own thirst for power."

The secret files in Heidrich's hands were among the documents of which the rulers of the Third Reich were the most afraid.

Hitler, foresightedly fearing Heidrich who had so many of his own characteristics, sent him to Czechoslovakia where he became the omnipotent ruler. When Czechoslovak patriots

killed Heidrich, the superiors among his bodyguard were not even punished. Hitler was happy with repressions of the Czechoslovak people, turning Lidice into a huge scaffold and flooded the country in blood. Heidrich's replacement was Himmler -- a man similar in likes and manner of behavior but, from Hitler's point of view, with a gift very valuable for this type work -- an almost pathological fear for his own life.

Himmler's health left to be desired and he never parted with his physician and massagists whom he trusted more than anyone else of his entourage.

In his personal life, Himmler avoided excesses not because he considered them immoral; he was simply watching over his health.

The fear which Himmler felt of Hitler was expressed in a most shameless and undignified manner. Even Keitel, who was known as Hitler's lackey, said that each time that Himmler leaves the Fuhrer's office after the dressing down, he experiences a feeling of loathing and disgust putting a glass of water in the feminine well groomed fingers of the Reichsfuhrer.

It is precisely this slavish fear of Himmler's that made the Fuhrer believe that his choice would be more devoted to him than Heidrich was.

However, crawling in front of the Fuhrer, flexible as a viper -- even his outside appearance reminded of that snake -- Himmler had inherited many of the characteristics of his predecessor whose right hand he had been for a long time.

For many years, having become accustomed to listen to the stronger Heidrich, Himmler had remained his subordinate. However, becoming the chief of the security services of the Third Reich, Himmler turned out to be an even more terrible personality than Heidrich. He was so afraid of the Fuhrer's discontent that his entire work was guided by one thing only: the desire to foresee his wishes. For this reason, he some times, in his zeal as an executioner, engaged in such excesses that even Hitler sometimes had to express amazement at the hasty obedience of his chief assistant.

Usually, Himmler disarmed the Fuhrer by quoting, in his defense, any phrase or quotation from his speech, claiming that he had reported them.

The Führer loved those who collected every word he said and considered it as the law of the land. And Himmler was able to discover this weakness.

Yet, the more he frequented Hitler, the more he noticed in him characteristics shared by his former chief Heidrich and, therefore, by himself as well. Gradually, Himmler developed a secret hatred for Hitler: he himself could become man No. 1 of the Reich. He was no longer satisfied with being man No. 2.

More than anyone else, Himmler became close to Walter Schellenberg. He began trusting in him after becoming entirely certain that this young man had very firm rules of behavior. Schellenberg served not the Reich, not the Third Reich, not the Nazi Party, not even the Führer. He was devoted to one man only, on whom he entrusted all his hopes. He zealously and devotedly worked in favor of that man and, led by him, as a reward for his devotion, earned his share of power.

Himmler was that type of man for Schellenberg.

Being a clever politician, Schellenberg had no high opinion of Himmler's merits and well understood the full baseness of his nature. However, he knew that the position of chief of the security service of the Third Reich is held by a candidate for a Führer. He held in his hands all the secret threads of the Reich's administration. The solidity of a totalitarian regime is built on a widespread and all-embracing system of secret services with their repressive power.

In 1939, with a small group of sympathizers, Schellenberg had established contact with British intelligence. Presenting themselves as German officers inimical to the regime, they were able to establish relations with official English circles and interest them in a conspiracy against Hitler, while intending to penetrate the higher spheres of the British government hierarchy. Hitler approved the idea and his British colleagues assured Schellenberg that soon a highly placed official representative would meet Schellenberg in Holland. This also was known to Hitler.

On 8 November, a few hours prior to the explosion of the bomb at , where the attempt against the Führer was being staged, Heidrich suddenly issued instructions to interrupt the secret talks with British intelligence. The English liaison officers were captured and taken to Germany.

The operation succeeded in the sense that the German propaganda started praising Hitler as a divine personality

protected by providence itself. The English were depicted as the instigators of a unique crime, and Holland was compromised. All this together was as though a prelude to whip up among the Germans an enthusiasm for the planned war.

However, such exploits were far back in the past.

Under the blows of the Soviet army, the structure of the racist empire shook and broke down. The allies landed on the continent. The leaders of the Reich, including Hitler himself, feverishly engaged with the British and the Americans in secret diplomatic trade. Each one of them, proposing himself as the head of the new Reich, pledged to continue the war against the USSR and demanded the support of England and the USA. They differed only in the forms which Germany's capitulation to the west had assumed, and what should Germany keep out of its military booty.

Schellenberg spent all his time with Himmler, inspiring and encouraging him in his resolution to become Hitler's successor, conducting in Stockholm talks with representatives of the secret English and US diplomacy already on behalf of the future new Führer. Some of these representatives were taken by Schellenberg to Himmler's staff quarters in Hoenliken where, in complete safety, they could discuss with the Reichsführer.

In order to ensure the success of this project, the Brigadenführer needed people who were devoted and reliable, and would rapidly carry out all his instructions.

Alfred Faergof was to choose several such people out of the special personal group of Walter Schellenberg.

With his firm behavior in jail, Johann Weiss had proved his unconditional devotion to Schellenberg. However, Faergof was not in a hurry to adopt the final decision. The more he liked Weiss, the more he suspected his reserved manner and the dignity with which he behaved. Faergof was basically certain that the nobler the shell of a man is, the more hot he was hiding. His experience indicated that the more cowardly a man is the more he tries to observe all external rules of behavior and morality.

One evening, Faergof asked Weiss on a boat trip on the Wanzee. Noticing his rowing, he asked him whether he ever had been a sailor. Weiss said that he had lived in Riga and frequently went out to sea with his friend Henrich Schwartzkopf.

Faergof said scornfully:

"Willi Schwartzkopf's nephew? The Obersturmbanfuhrer who has discovered the talent of a flour dealer? I think that he will soon become rich with his economic work with the SS."

"Willi Schwartzkopf is an old member of the party," objected Weiss.

"That is why he succeeded in acquiring so much Arianized property that he became rich!"

"He lives very modestly."

"Where?"

"In his personal office."

"Have you been in his new home?"

"I am only Henrich's friend."

"That is useless. Friends should be chosen not because one likes them but for the position they have in the Reich."

"I do not dare offer my friendship to the Fuhrer," smiled Weiss.

Faergof laughed but his eyes remained cold. Suddenly, he asked imperatively:

"Were you truly ready to give your life for Schellenberg when you were in jail?"

"What choice did I have?" in turn asked Weiss.
"I preferred to be hung for my devotion to Schellenberg rather than for failing him."

"That was well said," approved Faergof. "You know, people wearing hero clothing do not inspire my trust. There is always something unnatural in this. One more question: did you know Hakke?"

"Yes."

"What could you tell me about him?"

"A blabbermouth."

"More."

"If you know anything else about him then go ahead!"

"What do you know of him precisely?"

"I would say, less than you do."

"Ah, so!" said evilly Faergof. "Now, Hakke said that he had offered you the files which he had in his safe."

"What do you mean 'stated'?" Johann asked. "Did anyone ask him?"

"I am asking you now,"

"What are you asking me?"

"Why did you refuse to take the files? You knew whose files they were."

"That is why I refused," Weiss answered.

"Be more specific," said Faergof.

"If I were only to take them in my hand," Weiss said, "I would have been long liquidated. Is that not so?"

"That is so," confirmed Faergof.

"Well, that is my answer to your question."

"Why did you not report this?"

"To whom?"

"To the chief."

"Figure it out yourself: If Schellenberg did not wish to have some information on the Fuhrer which should have remained secret to everyone else, what would he have done with me? He would have liquidated me."

"And, had he wanted to study the files?"

"Then, why would he wish of me to give them to him? In that case again he would have acted with me the same."

"Listen!" exclaimed Faergof, "I like you. You are simply a sensible coward."

Weiss said convincingly:

"I do not conceal this. In our service, the only way to remain alive is to try not to foresee what you will be ordered to do but do only that which you are ordered to do."

"Excellent," said Faergof with relief. "Still, you probably wish something more yourself."

"As everyone else," Weiss sighed. "I wish that fewer people would order me and I would order more."

"Excellent!" said happily Faergof. "You have simply discovered the universal formula for encouraging any human individual." Inspired by his own voice, he almost declaimed: "Man may realize his individuality only through power over someone else. Killing is a display of the instinct of power."

"Well said!" Weiss said. "One might think that you help the Führer write Mein Kampf."

"This is a poorly written book. The wealth of the German language has remained totally unused in it."

"This is the Bible of the party."

"Do not take me literally," mockingly advised Faergof. "Stylistic finery only darkens the meaning of a political document, each word of which must clearly penetrate into the head, like a bullet."

"That is right," Weiss agreed. "You are an amazing master of energetic speech."

"Without my many years of friendship with Walter, I would have long displayed my capabilities as a theoretician."

"Like Rosenberg?"

Faergof frowned.

"Goebbels wittily pointed out that 'in our program socialism is only a trap for the bird'. I consider, however, that Rosenberg misused too much socialist terminology and, in its time, this alienated from us the German industrialists and financiers."

"And now?"

"You know that the industrial and financial magnates were most directly linked to the '20 July conspiracy.' However, Schpeier, the Reich's Minister of Armaments obviously, with the Führer's knowledge, did not allow an investigation of their participation to the conspiracy. Whatever the case, they hold the military economy of the country in their hands and that could have affected it."

The boat came to the shore and Weiss helped Faergof out of the boat. Ashore, he asked:

"Do you have any other questions?"

"Please," objected Faergof, "I simply had a pleasant chit-chat with you."

"No," firmly said Weiss. "For this, at present, you have no, and could not have, time."

"Very well," Faergof agreed. "For the time being, I have no objections whatsoever to you."

"That is all I wanted to know," said Weiss with satisfaction. He added: "You may rest assured that your perceptiveness once again did not mislead you."

It appeared that "highly secret" assignment which Weiss was carrying out under Faergof's supervision demanded neither any particular skill nor effort.

He was to watch that within a certain time, of a sector of the road and street on his assigned building, as well as at the entrance of that building, no people whose arrival he did not know of would show up. Or else, wherever he was, he had to watch out for any car whose license number he had been told in advance and report on it by the radio to an unknown correspondent.

It was not difficult to notice that he himself was being watched. It was as though he was in a gigantic prison and, deprived of freedom, punctually carried out anything that was ordered of him.

Soon, Weiss received an assignment to Stockholm. However, his assignment was as before. He became a part of the well coordinated and impeccably operating information machinery in which Schellenborg had included the most experienced agents of his secret service.

As yet, it was impossible to abandon this machinery, even for a very short time. All its parts were so coordinated that the least deviation immediately led to alarm signals along the entire chain. From the observation post the agent who, willingly or unwillingly had committed an error was singled out as well as the agent who was suspected of violating the rules of the service. The repression frequently took place on the spot and Weiss, as the others, had been issued a silent gun for the purpose.

The complete isolation in which Weiss found himself seemed to him to be catastrophic. He was dying from lack of action, from the fruitlessness of his efforts to get in touch with his own people. Despairing, he already believed that the news of the victory of the Soviet Army over fascist Germany would find him somewhere in Stockholm. Yet, as before, he would remain alone around the hated telephone booth. He used these booths whenever he had to report that Count Bernadotte, the nephew of the King of Sweden, had left his residence to meet the trusted envoy sent by Hitler. Most frequently, the envoy was Schellenberg himself.

Weiss knew that the Count was not only the president of the Swedish Red Cross. He was also a director of the Swedish branch of the American firm "International Business Machines," which belonged to the Morgan Trust. Possibly, he was linked not only with the business but with the ruling circles of the USA as well, on behalf of whom he conducted the secret talks with the Hitlerites.

Weiss's obligations consisted in preventing Himmler's envoys from being followed, since Stockholm was literally flooded with the agents of Ribbentrop, Kaltenbrunner, Beckmann, Goebbels and the Führer himself. In turn, the special group of the sixth branch of the SD, which included Weiss, also watched all these agents.

Unexpectedly, Weiss was relieved from his duties. He was ordered to go to a suburban Stockholm house, to train in the methods of conspiracy the personnel of the Gestapo, the officer personnel of the SS and the high Nazis who were now in hiding. He had studied these methods while carrying, in his time, together with Dietrich, Lansdorf's assignment.

Johann showed up at the indicated address at the proper time and, after going through an entire ritual of exchanging secret passwords, found himself in a big hall paneled in black oak with heraldic shields, hunting trophies and ancient weapons. A big group had gathered here, not only people of middle age

our youth also with the bearing of storm troopers. Side by side with the rostrum destined for Weiss, Hitler's portrait was placed on a special stand, lined with bits of different types of wood. Two stands with burning torches flanked the portrait.

Aleksandr Belov was not considered a skillful speaker at the Institute. He was always embarrassed, looking from the stand at the faces of his comrades who thought as he did, who knew what he knew and who needed not at all to be convinced by him of something of which they had already been convinced no less than he himself. For this reason, as a speaker, he was always shy, feeling guilty, swallowing his words, as though impatient to finish, as though he expected someone to shout at him: "Don't waste time! Time is life and you are shortening this life of ours!"

Yet, when he stood up on the stand here, in this rich hall and saw the respectful faces of the Swedish fascists, who welcomed him as their senior, he was inspired and delivered a brilliant speech. Apparently, it made quite an impression. The public was so impressed that, when Weiss finished, there was a long pause. It was only after he left the stand that polite applause was heard. It sounded dull, since the hands of all the present had become moist from their sweat.

In his speech, Weiss mixed business recommendations covering methods of conspiracy of the German fascists going in clandestinity with communications as to the number of people they had killed and how. In conclusion, quoting from a speech by Hitler he said that this was only one episode in the history of the thousand year Reich. He assured his public that the Third World War would bring the master race total domination over all other peoples.

This promise full of optimism did not make the Swedish fascists excessively happy. However, they made notes of business part of his speech, with the zeal of Sunday School children.

Answering questions, Weiss advised the bearded to shave off their beards, and the shaved to grow them; he advised the married men to divorce since women talk too much and may betray them; he advised the poor to become rich to conceal their past while the rich, on the contrary, to become needy. Furthermore, he gave a great deal of useful advice in the case that anyone of those present would go to jail. With full knowledge of the matter, he explained how to use best and most efficiently the time spent in jail, how to keep up in good health. He shared his experience in this respect generously, with unusual frankness.

Weiss's recommendations quite depressed his public. It was only during the banquet given in his honor that the mood somewhat improved. Sitting at the table, Weiss was told the names of the Swedish financiers who themselves had offered their services as Himmler's agents. They wished to establish, with their help, links with Prime Minister Churchill, thus trying to reach more rapidly an agreement on conditions for peace acceptable to fascist Germany.

Weiss succeeded in learning even the essentials of the memoranda exchanged by the representatives of the various parties in the course of such talks.

The local fascists were mainly worried for their own fate and were indignant at the excessive claims made by the western states toward Germany. They recommended to Weiss to be quite careful in Stockholm since, following the victories of the Soviet Army, the Swedish people were in a very firm mood. Displaying swastika badges now was almost equivalent of committing suicide. Several members of the fascist party had been killed on the street.

Weiss promised to take care of himself.

Two days later he was given another assignment. He was to go to Berlin in the same plane as an official of the German Minister of Foreign Affairs. This official was carrying a bag of diplomatic mail and was to travel not alone but in the company of armed Ribbentrop agents.

Half an hour before the time for the landing, the airplane was to land on a reserve airfield where the official and his guards were to be eliminated. If the airplane failed to land, Weiss had to shoot the official with his silent gun.

"What about me?" Johann asked.

"If you escape the guards, make a parachute jump and everything will be in order."

From that moment on, Weiss was closely followed by two agents. They took him to the airport and remained until the doors of the plane closed.

The pilot turned out to be a trusted man. As was agreed upon, he punctually landed on a reserve and now empty airfield. The official and his guards could not even move: fire from automatics was aimed directly at the places where they were sitting.

Absolutely everything had been planned in advance: the death of those people was to be explained as a result of an attack by enemy fighter planes. Leaving the aircraft, Weiss saw that repair workers from the engineering troops of the SS were already patching up the holes with pieces of metal.

Troops armed with automatic weapons were lined on the platforms on both sides of the aircraft. One of them politely showed Weiss where the car that was expecting him was.

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These days, Schellenberg was, of all the government leaders of Germany, the most purposeful, energetic and firm. However, the future fate of the Reich was the least of his worries. He was certain that his own future did not depend on this in the least. Long ago, since Stalingrad, he had realized that the military defeat of the Reich was inevitable. He relied on Himmler. If Himmler were to become man No. 1 in Germany he, Schellenberg, would be man No. 2. Whatever type of Germany that would be, that was unimportant. However, everything was being decided for him now, these days. Dispatching Folksturm -- the people who were piled in trucks like freight and hastily sent to the eastern front -- interested Schellenberg only because this could slow the advance of the Soviet Army. He needed time to conclude Himmler's talks with those who had assumed the role of secret diplomatic agents of the western powers.

The eve of the fall of Hitlerite Germany was for Schellenberg as though the peak of all his activities. Now, his fate as the first assistant to the new Fuehrer and man No. 2 in Germany depended upon his intelligence and skill. Himmler's personal capitulation would have been for him a tragedy, a greater catastrophe than the surrender of Germany. In his opinion, a military defeat of the Reich did not mean a political defeat as well. Acting in such a critical moment purposefully and firmly, one could carve a great future for one's self. Thus, he acted.

Those days, Schellenberg did not leave Himmler out of sight. He was exceptionally brisk, self-assured and eloquently fanned the imagination of his chief with the dizzying prospects of totalitarian power.

At the Hoenlichen bomb shelter, Schellenberg showed Himmler a motion picture film of the Fuehrer which an agent had

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taken, on his orders, with the help of a concealed camera.

The film was being shown in slow motion which revealed clearly and in detail even the most insignificant aspects of Hitler's physical fate.

On the gray screen in front of them, as though in an aquarium under water, there moved in space a stooped man with a pale, weak, uncertain face and drooping eyelids hanging as those of a decrepit dog. The left hand, on its own volition, shook, like the fins of a seal. He raised his right hand to his ear, listening. His hearing had considerably worsened after the recent operation. He went to the table. His feet dragged on the floor. That was the walking of an old man. He took a piece of paper and with great difficulty, as though it was unbearably heavy, he raised it to his eyes. Hitler had developed also poor eyesight and now, the documents submitted to him were typed on a special typewriter with exceptionally big letters.

Himmler moved his chair closer to the screen. He looked at his Fuehrer silently, searchingly, with obvious delight.

A few days previously, Schellenberg had discussed Hitler's state of health with Professor de Krini and the director of the psychiatric hospital Scharite. These were trusted people, and the information they provided was of a most encouraging nature: Hitler's condition was hopeless. Then, he arranged a meeting between Himmler and de Krini and the Reich's chief of the public health service, Konti. Himmler listened to them tensely and eagerly, understanding everything: he had already read in the medical encyclopedia an article on the so-called Parkinson's disease -- that was the diagnosis of Hitler's illness.

Now, after seeing the film, and turning on the light, Himmler said with hypocritical sympathy:

"This is all due to the fact that the Fuehrer has an entirely unnatural way of life: he is turning night into day, sleeping no more than two or three hours. His endless work and constant explosions of rage exhaust those around him and create an unbearable atmosphere." He admitted: "When he calls me, every time I feel a mortal fear. In a fit of rage, he wouldn't think twice of shooting me."

"Yes," agreed Schellenberg. "And if you keep waiting, one good day your body will be taken out of the bomb shelter under the Reichchancery, as has already been the case with others."

Himmler paled but, as before, hypocritically exclaimed:

"To die in the hands of the Fuehrer is a great honor!"

Schellenberg had iron control over himself and patience. However, even he was sometimes disarmed by this shameless and now completely useless hypocrisy. Hypocrisy was as though Himmler's second nature. Signing the order of "special regime" for dozens of thousands of inmates in concentration camps, he complained:

"If our enemies were to be more humane, they would have undertaken the maintenance of the prisoners of war and would have supplied them with food themselves. I cannot starve the German people to feed those parasites."

Most of the medical experiments over the inmates had been sanctioned by him. Reading the results of such experiments, sent to him by the medical executioners, Himmler said:

"I am more concerned with the health of the German people than anyone else. The testing of new medicines on living subjects is a guarantee that our medical science will not err in creating the people of the higher race."

He followed particularly carefully the successes of the SS doctors who experimented in sterilizing inmates.

"The Fuehrer demands of us to kill billions of Slavic people every year. But I am a dreamer. We could insure our future by retaining manpower but depriving it of the dangerous possibility to multiply."

Himmler was frantically afraid that Hitler may be told of his secret talks with agents of the western powers. On the eve of their arrival at Hoenlichen, he pretended to be ill. To create an upsurge of energy in Himmler, Schellenberg even decided to frighten him. He said that, according to his information, Kaltenbrunner suspected that Himmler was engaging in such talks.

Hundreds of Kaltenbrunner agents were prodding around Hoenlichen and hunting for Schellenberg people.

Himmler then said angrily:

"They must be killed, killed on the spot!" More softly, he advised: "Those among our agents who cannot deal with this

without attracting undue attention, should be immediately liquidated and the investigation reports should be such as to make this clear: there are traitors in our ranks, and they are being eliminated."

"Yes, sir," answered Schellenberg.

A few days after seeing the film, Himmler called Schellenberg to his estate in Wustrava. As they were walking through the forest, he said:

"Schellenberg, it seems to me that there is hardly anything left to be done with Hitler." He asked: "Do you trust de Krini's diagnosis."

"Yes," answered Schellenberg. "True, I have not seen the Fuehrer for some time. However, my observations lead to the following conclusion: the last moment has come for us to begin to act."

Himmler nodded, agreeing. Then, he stopped and said significantly:

"If the Anglo-Americans honestly help me win over Russia, I am willing to reward them. We could let England rule part of Siberia -- between the Ob' and the Lena. We could give the USA the area between the Lena, the Kamchatka and the Sea Okhotsk." He asked: "Do you think that they would be satisfied with this?"

"Yes," Schellenberg said. "No doubt."

Right now, he was not interested in the dreams of the future Fuehrer. He was more of a realist. He was glad that Himmler was feeling firm. Therefore, one could expect more energetic action now.

Schellenberg was most worried than all of the bloody reputation Himmler enjoyed. The main thing now was to whitewash him so that this reputation would be no obstacle to the assumption of power by the new dictator. Over six million Jews had been killed on the basis of a plan approved by Himmler at a conference in one of the villas of the Wansee area, which was known, for this reason, as the "Wansee Plan."

In January 1944 Schellenberg had foresightedly organized a meeting between Himmler and the former President of Switzerland, Muzi. On behalf of the Jewish organization, the latter had offered five million Swiss francs for liberation of Jews from a list to be delivered.

Himmler was in favor of the deal. He asked that the entire sum be delivered to the Reich as tractors, trucks and technical equipment. For himself personally, he wanted articles to be published in the American and English press whose authors would describe him only as a government worker of the Third Reich. They were to remain silent as to his role of head of the security service.

Now, after the talks with Himmler had been held, Bernadotte came from Sweden and, almost simultaneously, from Switzerland, the 80-year-old Arthur Lazard. The old man was accompanied by his younger son.

Schellenberg took Lazard to one of Himmler's residences.

Muzi carried out his pledge: Arthur Lazard was bringing a package of English and American newspapers which carried articles about Himmler.

In silence, the old Lazard was sitting in a chair. He was wearing a black morning coat, and wide striped gray trousers, with the creases dropping over his feet. The starched collar with its bent corners as though supported his head. His eyes were dull, looking inwards, dead.

Leaving Germany, his wife parted with him as though with a corpse. Yet, he was not afraid of death: death was following him like a shadow, as payment for the years he had lived. What if they were to kill his son? It would make six million plus one. He could not consider himself a victim. He had come here because he was quite old: his shriveled heart could withstand all this.

He was thinking: I wished God had not allowed such a thing. Yet if one could trade with the fascists now the life of several thousand men, why not do it? He knew: when Hitler came to power the western powers helped him rearm, hoping that he would attack the Bolsheviks. And when the Nazis in Germany killed the Jews, the western powers were silent. They kept silent while the Nazis trained in the craft of murders, using the Jews.

He knew that Eichman had even learned the Jewish language, trying to acquire the necessary training for his duties as chief of the service specializing in the killing of Jews.

Lazard was against the Soviet Union: he considered that that country had robbed those who, thanks to mental superiority, were able to make money the way he himself was able to.

"Yet it was no one else but the Bolsheviks who were to defeat fascist Germany. And only the Soviet army could relieve all the prisoners from the fascist concentration camps. If it could only happen!..."

Lazard was aware of the secret talks of the allies with the Hitlerites. He knew that the fascists were transferring from the western front to the eastern all their troops, hoping to stop the Russians with the help of the allies.

He knew that Allen Dulles, in a talk with a Hitlerite agent, had said: "With all due respect for the historical importance of Adolph Hitler and his work, it is difficult to imagine excited Anglo-Saxon public opinion agreeing to consider Hitler as the undisputed master of Great Germany." He had further added; "Himmler may be a man to talk to."

Lazard knew that Dulles, and he was not alone, adamantly, supported Himmler's candidacy as Hitler's heir.

If Himmler were to become the new Fuehrer, he would ask a great deal for the prisoners. Yet he could destroy all of them, claiming that it was Hitler's orders. He could put the blame on those who were closest to the Fuehrer.

Lazard knew that the mission he had undertaken was more than doubtful. It was to engage in talks with the chief executioner of his own people, for the sake of saving several thousand people marked on a list while hundreds of thousands, condemned to death, would remain in the concentration camps.

However, he undertook the mission hoping to talk Himmler into not evacuating the concentration camps in the face of the irreversible avalanche of the Soviet armies or the armies of the allies, slowly and carefully moving out from the western shores.

That is why he was here today.

The Reichfuehrer entered the room, accompanied by Schellenberg. He was feeling insecure, irritated and obviously uneasy, realizing the entire danger of talking to Arthur Lazard. Himmler considered it already an act of courage to shake the hand of a Jew. Yet he did it for the benefits which Schellenberg had mentioned.

From the very beginning, Himmler confusedly started saying that he personally suggested that the solution of the Jewish problem would be to evacuate the Jews on some island. However, this turned out to be impossible: first of all, due to foreign propaganda and secondly, due to the resistance which had developed in party circles. As though trying to justify himself, he suddenly wished to show Lazard documentary proof of his humane intentions. Excusing himself, he went to his office and started fussing with his papers.

He leafed through the reports from the concentration camps on the number of people who had been killed: weekly, monthly and quarterly; copies of his orders scolding the heads of the camp administrations for their slowness; reports with technical blueprints of gas chambers and his approval marked at the corner of the document.

He leafed through photographs of embalmed corpses with their burst lungs after their stay in vacuum chambers, where, with his approval, tests were being made of the endurance of human bodies in rarefied air (Goering's order to study the influence of high altitude flights on pilots).

He went through the number of tons of blood taken from children in concentration camp to be used by the front line troops.

He leafed through the reports of the Ministry of Agriculture on the use of fertilizer made out of the ashes of the crematoria.

He looked at the order dated 16 February 1942, signed by him, and skimmed through it:

"The commander SS and police in the East, Obergruppenfuehrer SS Krueger. Krakow.

"With a view to ensuring security I order that after the transfer to the concentration camp has been accomplished, the Warsaw Ghetto must be razed to the ground. Before this, use should be made of all suitable private homes and all the materials available. The razing of the Ghetto and the building of a concentration camp must take place since otherwise we will never pacify Warsaw and the actions of criminal elements would not be put an end to if the Ghetto remains.

"Submit an overall plan for the liquidation of the Ghetto. In any case, the still existing housing area inhabited by five hundred thousand people of the lower race and which will

never be suitable for Germans be erased from the face of the earth and the million-strong city of Warsaw, always a dangerous center of decadence and rebellion, be thus diminished.

H. Himmler."

Hatefully, he put this paper back into a box together with a piece of experimental soap made of human fat.

On his table he saw copies of previously drafted telegrams to the commandants of the Daha*u* and Vlossenborg camps.

"No question of surrendering. The camp must be immediately evacuated. No single inmate should fall alive in the hands of the enemy."

"Henrich Himmler."

He grabbed these telegrams, crushed them and threw them in the basket under the table. Then, bending, he picked them up and burned them in the ash tray. This made him feel better: one less proof.

Going back to the room where Lazard patiently waited him, Himmler immediately said he accepts all three conditions. First: he would order that the killing of Jews be stopped. Second: all the Jews still in the camp, whose number was quite inaccurate would, in any case, remain in the camps, and will not be "evacuated." Third: all Jews still in the camps will be entered on a list and a report will be made on them."

Stone-faced, Lazard listened to all this! After a pause, he said:

"I want my son to visit one of the camps. This is needed in order to make us sure that your instructions will be accurately carried out."

Himmler worriedly looked at Schellenberg. The latter nodded. Then, Himmler hastily said:

"Your wish, Mr. Lazard, will be met. You should have no doubt whatsoever."

Himmler trusted Schellenberg's talent of getting himself out of any tight corner.

He wanted to make a good impression on Lazard. Sitting down himself, in a very friendly tone of voice, he complained that the German economy had suffered, in solving the Jewish problem, a certain damage, depriving itself of skillful manpower and even of that segment of the technical intelligentsia which could have been particularly useful. With a regretful sigh, he ended: "Alas! The principles, no matter how strange they may seem at first, remain principles. We had to make a sacrifice for the sake of strengthening the national spirit." He stood up and, pledging pressing business, apologized for putting an end to the talk. On parting, he gave his hand again.

Lazard, with the absentmindedness of an old man apparently did not notice the gesture. At that point he was concerned only with lighting his cigarettes. His hands were occupied.

Proudly nodding, Himmler left the room. He was truly in a hurry: he had a meeting, in Hoenlichen, with Bernadotte. This meeting was exceptionally important to Himmler, for Bernadotte was to bring confirmation of the acceptance of Himmler's candidacy as the new Fuehrer, on the part of the interested circles in the USA and England.

Yet before leaving the room, Himmler stood at the door and told Lazard that already on that day he would order the liberation of a group of Jewish women from Ravensbruk. However, Lazard was to inform, as fast as possible, General Eisenhower of this act of kindness.

Through Bernadotte, Himmler intended to meet with Eisenhower. He was exceptionally pleasant to the Count.

It was not for the first time that Count Bernadotte had the honor to be received in Hoenlichen, the staff quarters of Himmler -- an estate, excellently concealed under a huge well organized hospital assumed to be for wounded SS.

Here, several cottages included the most secret offices of the security services; furthermore, individual wings have laboratories where chemists and bacteriologists were inventing new means for mass murder.

The regular personnel of these services, with skillfully bandaged extremities and supplied with crutches, arrived and went out of Hoenlichen in ambulances. Some particularly secret agents were taken out of the ambulances and taken back on

stretchers and, their faces were carefully bandaged as though they were heavily wounded in the head.

This method was used also to bring those whom Himmler wanted to interrogate personally. As a rule, those people did not come back: Moenlichon had its own cemetery, as several other hospitals.

In this "hospital" no one was subjected to rough torture: a great deal of different operations were being conducted in an excellently equipped surgical ward, but with no anesthesia whatsoever.

People were made to talk with the help of electrodes which were hitched to open sections of the brain or nerve ganglions with the muscles removed.

Wearing hospital gowns instead of uniforms, the SS here carried out their duties in a proper fashion.

Already during previous visits with Himmler, Count Bernadotte had been able to secure the freedom of many people of Scandinavian origin. They were taken out of the concentration camps at night in ambulances of the Swedish Red Cross, under the supervision of Schellenberg's people. The Count promised to inform Eisenhower of this fact, when submitting Himmler's conditions for a separate peace with the USA.

Having already met recently Ribbentrop and Kaltenbrunner, the Count had heard them make the same request: they had asked him to be the middle man between them and Eisenhower. He was aware of the fact that some allied circles were relying on Himmler. He himself shared this point of view. He was profoundly disappointed when Kaltenbrunner had suddenly banned the further shipment of wounded Swedes back home. As a diplomat, the Count understood that Kaltenbrunner was doing this in order to harm Himmler -- to prevent him from playing the role of a humanist in the eyes of the western powers. He also understood that Kaltenbrunner himself would love to play such a role. However, this fact proved that Himmler himself was not as yet so powerful as to openly act against his competitors, and the more so against Hitler.

The Count long suspected Himmler of undecisiveness, of weakness. Now, he was amazed how this man with the constitution of a slug, could carry out the duties of the main executioner of the Third Reich.

Furthermore, information had reached the Count that the talks between the Hitlerites and the agents of the allies, with the help of the Swedish intermediary, had become known to Soviet circles. His name was delicately being kept out but the Count already knew how detailed the information the Soviet circles had of his work. All this was the result of fine work done by Soviet intelligence. It was apparent that an agent had penetrated the main fortress of the German secret service.

Aware of the inflexible position of the Soviet Union and of its strategic and political power, and understanding what the role of the Soviet Union would be in solving post-war German problems, the Count realized that any attempts at promoting, now, the candidacy of Himmler as the head of the new German Government were hopeless and could only harm his own cause in the future.

There was a time when Himmler could have headed a government: the leaders of the "20 June" conspiracy relied on Himmler's becoming the chief of Germany. Aware of the conspiracy, the Reichsfuehrer connived with the conspirators and his secret service remained idle. Yet, he was shy and undecisive. Instead of taking over the organization of Hitler's murder himself, Himmler waited for this to be done by a one-handed, one-eyed man who was willing to sacrifice in a desperate exploit. Yet had Himmler acted he could have then executed the murderer and the chief conspirators and, stepping on their corpses, taken over the Fuehrer's throne as his true heir.

Now, at the end of the war, hatred for fascism had united the peoples of the world and it would be difficult to persuade public opinion that the role of an intermediary between the German fascists and the western powers was nothing but fine diplomacy. Bernadotte realized that his activities would look like an attempt at helping the murderers erase the proofs, as though advising a murderer to do a minor good, for example, to release from its cage a bird from a home in which he had killed the people.

All this annoyed the Count. He was in quite a bad mood when Himmler and Schellenberg, apologizing for their slight delay, joined him in the cottage.

From the first minutes, Schellenberg noticed something new in the Count. In the past, in previous meetings, he was always businesslike, purposefully hurrying to switch from small talk, inevitable at the beginning of a serious conversation, to the nature of the thing. Now, however, he immediately

Started talking of the surroundings of Moenlichen, interested in its hunting facilities, displaying a fine knowledge of hunting.

Trying to understand the secret reasons for such an unusual behavior, Schellenberg resolved to let the conversation go on and watch the Count. Himmler, however, being a good actor himself, was unable to guess this talent in others. Sitting down, he profited from a brief lull in the conversation and immediately started talking business.

He began solemnly, as though getting ready to share with the Count a big political secret.

"We Germans," said he deeply, "must declare that we have lost out to the western powers."

Himmler paused, expecting to see the crushing impression that such an admission would make on the Count. Bernadotte was looking at his nails as though he had never seen them before. Then, he produced out of his vestpocket a piece of shabbis and started playing with it.

Somewhat confusedly, Himmler said:

"That is what I asked you to transmit, with the help of the Swedish government, to General Eisenhower in order to avoid any further senseless struggle and bloodshed."

The Count raised his head and sympathetically asked:

"It seems that now the losses suffered by the German army on the eastern front reach, some days, over 100,000?" He said, his face expressionless: "This is horrible."

Himmler murmured:

"The Germans, and I, above all, cannot capitulate to the Russians."

"This is understandable," the Count said.

As though having obtained an approval, Himmler warmly declared:

"We will continue to fight there until the front of the western powers takes over from the Germans."

"Yes, naturally," the Count agreed and immediately peddled out: "Yet, according to my information, the American and English commanders have no divisions similar to the SS. Furthermore, they will need time to talk to their troops who, so far, were convinced that they were the allies of the Russians." He unexpectedly asked: "How is the Fuehrer's health?"

Himmler said darkly:

"I have no right to report this for any further dissemination. However, to you personally, I may say that, given the current march of events, it is a question of two or at best three days. Hitler will lose his life in this dramatic struggle." He added sadly: "The only consolation will be that he will fall in the struggle against Bolshevism --- against that evil to the prevention of which he devoted his entire life."

"Do you know exactly what day when the Fuehrer will fall in this struggle?" the Count asked.

Himmler was embarrassed.

"I personally am guided by the considerations expressed by the doctors treating the Fuehrer."

"Ah, the doctors!" was all the Count said.

Schellenberg had to join in, to channel the conversation in a given direction; the main purpose of this meeting was to organize a meeting between Himmler and Eisenhower. Finally, the Count agreed to let Himmler write a letter to Guenther explaining his request and hoping that His Excellency would support him. Apologizing for urgent affairs, Himmler left and Schellenberg managed to remain a few minutes behind. He did this in order, once again, adamantly to repeat Himmler's request to Bernadotte: to fly immediately to Eisenhower and arrange a meeting between him and Himmler.

The Count took Schellenberg's arm in a friendly fashion. He always liked him, considering him a clever and bold adventurer. Had Schellenberg been in Himmler's place, he would have acted far more firmly and would have determined when Hitler was to die without consulting with his personal physicians.

Slowly walking along the dark alley, the Count said:

"The Reichfuehrer does not realize the true state of things." He sighed: "At present, I am completely unable to help

"him." After a pause, he added: "I could have done this after my first visit, if he would have then fully assumed control over the Reich's affairs. Now in my opinion, he has no chance whatsoever. Presently smiling, he advised: "As to you, my dear Schellenberg, you would have done better to be concerned with your self."

When Schellenberg returned to Himmler, the latter inspired by his talk with the Count, started describing the steps he intended to take the moment he became Fuehrer. He immediately mentioned, wonderingly pursing his lips, that the name of the party should be changed. The western powers would ask that the name "National-Socialist" be dropped.

"The National Union Party." What do you think of that?" suggested Schellenberg.

"Excellent!" exclaimed the Reichfuehrer and praised him: "you think amazingly fast, Walter!"

Then, Himmler started complaining of Kaltenbrunner: he was interfering with his orders and deleting those having to do with the liberation of small groups of prisoners. Yet this was necessary in connection with the promises made to Muzi and Bernadotte. Annoyed, he said:

"I understand that, for the Fuehrer, all these prisoners and the foreign workers are hostages. He may threaten to the very last minute the western powers that he will order a slaughter in the camps. However, I too have the right to build up a certain guarantee in the eyes of the west by threatening to destroy all the camps with all the inmates."

Himmler ordered Schellenberg to set up a secret group consisting of particularly reliable members of his service.

On the one hand, this group was to prevent the total destruction of the inmates in the camps, if Hitler or Kaltenbrunner were to issue such an order. On the other hand, the same group of people should be ready to carry out a similar order, if it came from Himmler.

It so happened, that it was Weiss who was ordered to accompany Lazard's son to one of the concentration camps.

The purpose of the trip was to check how Himmler's order on the liberation of the inmates whose names were mentioned in the list was being fulfilled.

Weiss carried out Schellenberg's instructions in a somewhat peculiar fashion. At first, using his powerful document, and bypassing the commandant's office, he took the young man around the camp and thoroughly acquainted him with the situation. He showed him everything, including the premises close to the entrance to the crematorium with their hooks for hanging and wooden hammers on the floor in case that all the hooks were occupied. Only after that did he take him to the office.

Informed that a representative of the International Red Cross was to visit the camp, the camp commandant assumed his most respectful behavior with Weiss's companion. When the young man demanded to see the inmates whose names were in the list, the commandant said pleasantly:

"Unfortunately, they are all in cardboard boxes. We have no urns. Apparently, they were so shaken up by the happy news of immediate freedom"-- he smiled at Weiss as an accomplice -- "that they all collapsed of a heart attack. Our physicians tried to save them but were unable to."

Weiss showed his document to the grinning camp commandant. He said:

"You will answer for this with your own head. By whose order did you act?"

"Merc." The camp commandant took out of his pocket a paper and showed it to Weiss. It was signed by Kaltenbrunner.

On the way back, Weiss's companion sat in the back of the car and, in the rear mirror Weiss saw his pale and hate-filled face. Weiss pulled up on the side of the dirt road and parked near trees.

"What happened?" worriedly asked the youngster.

Weiss turned to him and asked:

"Did you understand everything?"

"What do you mean?"

"If you have understood everything and are unable to conceal your feelings, the same thing may happen to you as happened to them... Possibly, you may have an automobile accident."

"Do not try to frighten me!" Fiercely, with desperate resolve, the youngster started accusing Weiss in the murder of

"the unfortunate prisoners. Yes, he took part in this murder!"

Weiss listened without interruption.

"You are a brave man," he said, when the stream of curses stopped. "I like this. Are you sure you will never forget what you have seen today?"

"Never!" exclaimed the youngster and, immediately coming to his senses, looked at Weiss with amazement.

"Well, amen. Let us go on. Only, please, do not think of shooting me in the back," said Weiss with a smile. "I can see in your face that you would love to do that."

Delivering back his companion in Hoenlichen, Weiss reported to Schellenberg of the results of his trip.

Schellenberg was furious.

Weiss said:

"Pardon me, sir, but it seems to me that this was not simply negligence."

"And what was it?"

"It seems to me that he who ordered this wanted to harm our Reichfuehrer."

Schellenberg looked long and carefully at Weiss's pleasant and calm face. Then, he ordered:

"Choose yourself two people, absolutely reliable and ready for anything." He added: "I give you three... no, I give you one day. You are to await further orders."

"Yes, sir," Weiss clicked his heels lightly, not considering it necessary to make a show of the military posture: the time had come when this was no longer required of him.

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Weiss went to the massage parlor.

Here, everything was as though there was no war. As usual, the well trained personnel were pleasant and serviceable. It was quiet and restful, the cabins and robes were sterilly clean. After the usual procedure, the professor invited Weiss into his office for a "medical check-up."

Stuthoff was looking worse, his face was even more pinched and tired.

Weiss reported everything he had been able to learn those past days.

The professor listened silently, making notes from time to time in a notebook. He asked:

"Is this all?"

"The essential only."

The professor said:

"The Hitlerites are unanimous in their intent to destroy the concentration camps and the inmates to prevent them from becoming proofs or witnesses of the prosecution. This is the usual strategy of criminals. Furthermore, Hitler hopes that this greatest of all crimes will force the Nazis afraid of punishment to go into clandestinity and continue the fight. As regards the attempts of some of the rulers of the Reich now to redeem the murder of millions by releasing a few hundred or even thousand inmates, this is a total swindle. However, this must be taken up, in order to relieve a larger number of prisoners than are indicated in the lists. Our main task now is to prevent the mass destruction of people. That is the order of the Center. I may report -- he barely smiled -- that your data on the secret bases for terrorist underground fascist organizations were studied at the Center, checked and, in accordance with such data, operative groups of our counterintelligence have been dropped in the mentioned areas. Thus, the Soviet Army is secure in its rear." He smiled: "By the way, Himmler's massagist consults me on purely medical matters. He told me confidentially that he had heard a telephone conversation between Schellenberg and Muzi. Schellenberg told Muzi that he personally, on several occasions, had helped Jewish families as well as mixed marriage families. He also assured him that he was considered among the "unreliable" from the point of view of the party leadership and

...and some power only within the state apparatus. The fascists are trying to deny fascism in the hope of remaining alive. They will betray one another and are ready to sell everything for the saving forgery of their presumed "unreliability."

Someone knocked at the door.

"Come in," the doctor said.

A young girl wearing the uniform of the auxiliary female corps of air defense warden entered the room. She was stately, small, with a disagreeable arrogant expression on her dull-like, cold, arrogant face.

"Let me introduce my Nadyusha!" the doctor said in Russian to Weiss.

It was as though the shoulders of the girl somewhat dropped, her face immediately switched into another expression-- shy, sweet and somewhat confused.

"Well!" she exclaimed and, blushing, gave her hands to Weiss. "I came in and I see a Fritz." She said, eagerly looking at Weiss: "So, that is what you are!"

Embarrassed, Weiss avoided her eyes.

"Well, enough of that, young people," the professor said, angrily, and asked his daughter: "Report!"

The girl took a chair so as to be able to look both at Johann and her father. She started talking, looking with smiling eyes at Weiss but using such a dry and strict voice as though it was someone else talking:

"The operation known under the code name of 'Volke' calls for the bombing of German territory by units of the German Air Force. The bombers will be camouflaged as allied air force. The bases of these units are marked on the map. The targets are as yet unknown. It is believed that the targets will be the concentration camps since the operation plan has been approved by Himmler and Kaltenbrunner."

"You see," the doctor said. "Kaltenbrunner prevents Himmler from freeing a few hundred men from the concentration camps and Himmler prevents Kaltenbrunner himself from doing the same, so that neither of them will have a better chance in the eyes of the allies. Yet both of them together have developed an operation calling for the killing of hundreds of thousands of people." He frowned, considering. Then, he looked at Weiss

sternly: "Your task is to find out which camps specifically are to be destroyed from the air. Second, I do not object that you be included in the combat group which should prevent this on the spot." The professor rose. "That is all!"

Weiss looked at the girl and hesitantly smiled.

"That is all!" repeated the professor.

The girl asked:

"May I accompany the comrade?"

"What else!" said angrily Stuthoff. "He is old enough to find his way out."

"Please, papa!" exclaimed the girl.

"I said no. In general, it's no use..."

"What is no use?" obstinately repeated the girl. "What if we are going in the same direction?"

"You know," the professor said, pushing Weiss to the door, "you better vanish!" He looked at his daughter and said sadly: "You are also in the operative group. Be patient. You will meet at the base..."

Whether it was the blinding beauty of the day or the brief caressing glance of a Soviet girl or simply because suddenly he felt an unexplainable feeling of the joy of living, Weiss felt that he was no longer tortured by the feeling of loneliness. He considered himself a particle of the huge world created by man for man and it was in such in amazingly high spirits that he went to see Renrich.

Renrich was in a dark mood. He pushed toward Weiss a few sheets of typewritten paper.

"Read! From the personal office of Willi Schwartzkopf."

Johann sat down and started reading.

"SS administrative-economic administration. Secret.

"The Reichfuehrer SS.

"Reichsführer! The gold teeth of dead inmates, as per your order, are given to the medical administration. There, this gold is used for gold teeth for our people. The Oberfuehrer SS has already a stock of gold exceeding 50 kilograms; this would cover any estimated needs for gold for the next five years.

"Since for security reasons as well as in the interest of making proper use of the gold, I do not consider it expedient to accumulate greater amounts of gold for this purpose.

"I request permission that in the future all golden teeth taken from dead inmates be sent to the Reichsbank.

"Heil Hitler!"

"Acting for Frank, Brigadenfuehrer SS and Major General of the SS."

The other document read:

"List of second-hand textile goods taken by order of the main administrative-economic administration SS from the Oswenzim and Lyublin camps:

"Used male clothing... 92,000 suits.

"Used female clothing..26,000 suits.

"Women's underwear, silk....3,900 sets."

"Total: 34 railroad cars"

"Rags -- 400 freight cars.

"Feather-beds and pillows -- 130 freight cars.

"Women's hair - 1 freight car.

"True copy:

"Hauptsturmfuehrer SS."

Looking at Weiss, Henrich exclaimed:

"And so on and so on! Johann, I can't stand it any longer. I will kill him!"

"If you do so," said Weiss drily, "you will be responsible for the death of hundreds of thousands of people. Now, your uncle is to us the source of information with the help of which we could save hundreds of thousands... Wait," he said, "now everything will clear up. Tell me, has Willi received orders for cutting off supplies to any of the camps?"

"Yes, recently, I believe for Dachau, Lindsberg, Mulfdorf and a few others."

"Find out where exactly! The point is that an operation is now being planned for the destruction of the inmates. The camps to be destroyed first will be cut off supplies. Do you get it?"

"Yes."

"Could you learn something today, say by this evening?"

"Yes."

"Well, that is all."

"Wait," Henrich asked. "That is not 'all.' Now you love this world 'all!' One should do something more if the people are to be saved."

"This will be done by the combat groups."

"What about me?"

"What about you? You are doing a tremendous job."

"No," objected Henrich. "No. I also must be there where you are. Do you promise?"

"All right," Weiss said. "We will have to talk about it."

At first, Weiss could not even recognize Zubov: walking along the street to the meeting place was a stooped man, unshaven, with a darkened face and prominent cheekbones.

After listening to Weiss, Zubov perked up:

"People? I have! I also have four Germans -- also among the camp inmates." He added, somewhat guiltily: "In our free time, we carry out jobs. Quite good fighters."

"Weapons enough?"

"And how!" Zubov said. "We have surplus for sale."

"So, until then," Johann smiled, "keep quiet... Just be absolutely ready."

"Clear!" Zubov said.

Weiss put a hand on his shoulder.

"Hold on, old man."

"It's quite hard," complained Zubov. "I wished I did not have to live in her home, it seems to me I see her everywhere... gnawing like a toothache." He asked: "Could I leave that place?"

"You shouldn't," Weiss said.

"Well, then, I must hold on."

"Yes," Weiss said.

Having apparently realized, after his talk with Bernadotte, the complete hopelessness of any attempt at promoting Himmler into a new Fuehrer, Schellenberg paid no longer any attention to the "special group," which included Weiss. And even though this group was coping well with the task of secret evacuation of people liberated from the camps according to the Bernadotte and Muhi list, the group now became part of another SS group totally immersed in drafting plans and ways for the destruction of the inmates and the foreign workers at secret projects.

Working within this general and expanded group, Weiss managed to see the list of SD representatives who were being sent to the camps to assume overall leadership of the operation. Operatives had to lower the number of people who had successfully reached their place of destination.

Furthermore, using blank forms, stamps and seals and various secret symbols acquired by Weiss, orders were forged postponing the "evacuation of the camp" for a certain time or initiating special order. Such orders were delivered to the camps by "couriers" taken among the German operatives or among other people who were perfectly familiar with the German language.

Usually, such orders were brought by SS officers or Gestapo personnel. Therefore, going to the camps, the agents could not deliver the order and leave immediately, as was the case of lower ranks. In order to avoid creating suspicion, they had to enjoy for a certain time the hospitality of the camp administration. However, every hour spent in the camp meant mortal danger...

Twelve SS representatives were to fly in three days to areas in Western Germany and assume charge of destroying the camps so that no traces would remain of them.

Stuthoff, informed of this by Weiss, told him a day later that the allies had been warned and that their fighter planes will be looking out. Yet if the German transport plane with the SS representatives still were to manage to land, they would be unable to do anything on the ground.

Immediately after the allied advance in the West, special "commando" units had begun to hunt for scientific and research materials, for the researchers themselves, for patents and technical documentation. They had no other instructions. This document and people hunting was known as "paper-clips." And even though there were groups among the "commandos" which could, undoubtedly, prevent the slaughter in the concentration camps, they were not being issued the order to do so. What to do?

Weiss said:

"We cannot include anyone among the passengers of the secret trip: the list has been signed by Himmler and Kaltenbrunner. However, the crew will be gathered only during the day of the flight and the flight personnel does not know one another.

"We could do the following: I will go to the airport with the Gestapo man on duty and, together, we will start checking the crew. I will become suspicious of one of the members of the crew and take him off the flight. If suitable, I will connect a man on duty with Dietrich -- Dietrich will tell him what I will tell Dietrich.

"Time will be running, the man on duty will begin being nervous and if, within that time, one of our men would turn up, specially trained, I will check his documents which I will find proper. The members of the crew are issued parachutes. He could jump after placing a mine. I see no other way."

"But this man must be a flyer. Otherwise, he will be exposed immediately."

"Yes, naturally, that is why I said: a specially trained man."

"But we have no such men."

"Perhaps Zubov has one in his group?"

When Weiss turned to Zubov, Zubov happily said:

"I went to Osoaviakhim School. I was already flying independently without the instructor and, one more hour, I would have had my pilot's license."

"What happened to that hour?"

Zubov was embarrassed.

"You understand, it was considered hooliganism in the air for premature Chkalov-type piloting. In a low altitude flight, the plane and I suffered." He smiled boastfully: "The passengers liked it: they were waving their handkerchiefs from the windows."

"Listen," Weiss said, "you understand, this flight..."

"Fine!" Zubov interrupted him. "I am immortal. I furthermore have to my credit over 20 parachute jumps. That is my main guarantee. Don't worry, I will live."

It was Nadya who supplied Zubov's documents. Giving them to Weiss, she said:

"The only thing needed is another photograph." She added: "The documents are quite good." She requested: "If possible, bring them back today: I must take them back."

"And if I fail?"

Nadya looked at Weiss, and said quietly:

"This would be rather hard on father, particularly after we have already lost mother."

Being told that it was Zubov who was to carry out the operation, the professor frowned.

"I do not doubt the flying capabilities of Comrade Dubov, but hooliganism with a 'U-2' is one thing, and piloting a big transport aircraft is something else." He added: "I am firmly against it."

"How about making him the flight engineer?"

"He is unfamiliar with the design of a German machine. He will fail!"

"Listen," Weiss said, "how about being the gunner?"

"That may do." The professor concluded, in an entirely different tone of voice: "The best thing is that he is experienced with parachute jumping. Sending anyone else would have been certain death."

Everything turned out to be far simpler than Weiss thought.

Calling to the room of the Gestapo member on duty the crew for additional investigation, and having established on the basis of their army documents who of them was the gunner, Weiss looked suspiciously at the man, maintaining as hard as he could, an evil searching expression on his face.

The small, stocky man at whom he was staring smelled so strongly of liquor that Weiss experienced a feeling of triumph.

"Pig!" shrieked Weiss. "Pig and coward! Getting drunk before a flight." Turning to the Gestapo man on duty, he said: "This is criminal carelessness on your part." Ordering the crew members away, he asked: "What do you intend to do?"

"I will call another man right away."

"How long will this take?"

"Twenty minutes, no more."

"The plane must leave in twelve minutes: it will be accompanied by fighter planes which are already probably in the air. You have caused the failure of an exceptionally important government assignment."

The man on duty was standing straight, pale, licking his parched lips.

Zubov entered, dressed in an air force uniform, with a traveling bag. He saluted. Weiss jumped at him:

"Why are you here without someone to accompany you? Show me your documents!" He looked, he shoved the man on duty, and said carelessly: "You have the luck of the devil." He winked: "I expect that I was accusing you without reason; apparently, you turned out to be more foresighted than I thought and this man of yours came not in twenty minutes but instantly." He patted the man on duty on the shoulder: "Good work."

The man on duty glanced at the documents and ordered Zubov:

"Get in the plane!"

Zubov said:

"But Mr. Untersturmfuehrer, I have another trip to make."

"March, let a word!"

Zubov left. Going out, he put the documents in his pocket.

Yet if those documents were not returned to Nadja today, Stuchoff, who had lost his wife here, could tomorrow, or even this evening, lose his daughter as well.

Weiss suggested to the man on duty to accompany him to the plane. The man was entering in his records that he had replaced the gunner.

The passengers were already in the plane. Zubov was not showing up. The Gestapo man was looking at his watch. He was invited to get inside the plane.

Weiss remained alone and was already ready to follow the man on duty, to look for Zubov. However, Zubov appeared at the gate, holding a parachute. He dropped it on the flight platform and was able to give Johann his documents.

Weiss was inordinately happy that he held those documents. He was astonished, but at first, paid no particular attention to the fact that Zubov had thrown down the parachute, followed by three others.

The moment the Gestapo man came off the plane, the ladder was pulled up and the door was locked. And the airplane, with a whistle of propellers, rolled along the take-off strip, gathering speed. Leaving the ground, the plane gained sharply in altitude.

Going back to the airport, together with the Gestapo man, Weiss asked:

"Why did they throw the parachutes out of the airplane? Were those useless?"

"No," the Gestapo man said. "It was simply that the senior member of the group -- a Standartenfuehrer -- was quite disturbed learning that one of the crew members was not to be trusted. He demanded that all members of the crew part with their parachutes. He considered this as an additional guarantee that the crew will not abandon the plane if the machine is attacked by enemy fighters. They will, to the very last minute, try to save the airplane, and therefore, the passengers." He said approvingly: "Well, there is some logic in this. The only thing I had to do was to carry out his categorical order."

Weiss looked at the empty sky, gigantic and endless. He experienced an overwhelming feeling of despair, of emptiness, as though he had just lost his own life. And everything around him seemed dead.

At group headquarters, Weiss was told that his desire had been met, and that he could, today, go to the aviation base to investigate the extent to which the personnel and equipment were ready for the special mission whose code name was "Wolke."

He went to the professor, returned the documents, reported that he was leaving and that Zubov will not be able to use a parachute in carrying out his assignment.

The professor, covering the documents with his hand, as though afraid of parting with them even though for a minute, said:

"Until you came, I kept thinking whether I would survive or not, if Nadezhda were to die. And, I realized that I would now. That is that. And now, Zubov. It is difficult. In our work, the easiest thing is when you decide on your own fate."

and not the fate of someone else." He looked firmly at Johann. "Being an experienced radio operator, I have included my daughter in the group which will be assigned to you. You must maintain constant operative connection with the Center." He opened a map. "In the area within the zone of air force operations against the base, there are several big concentration camps. However, here is what we have to consider." Stuthoff pointed at the map: "This is an underground concentration camp where the 'Wau-1' and 'Wau-2' are being manufactured. The people never leave the galleries. They work there, they die there, only their corpses are taken out and cremated above ground. Both main underground shafts stretch almost half a kilometer underground and are linked with 48 tunnels. There is just one entrance and one exit. The others have been walled in.

"Naturally, this underground camp which includes over 12,000 inmates cannot be destroyed from the air. Yet according to data obtained by your from Henrich, the entire camp will be put off rationing in six days, including today. Therefore, it is presumed that in six days it will be destroyed.

"Our main task is to find out what method will be used for destroying the camp and preventing the destruction." He said sadly: "The group I have given you is not so big as I wished but there is nothing I can do about it. You know yourself: not only Zubov but many other comrades are now engaged in most difficult and responsible assignments." He sighed and added: "Hopefully, they are operating under better circumstances."

Weiss was unpleasantly surprised that his assignment to the aviation place was not to be carried out alone but with Dietrich.

D Dietrich said, rubbing his hands:

"You know, I quite energetically insisted to join you in this assignment." He explained, smiling: "The operation is totally secret. The order has been signed by Himmler and Kaltenbrunner. You and I have nothing to do with its direct implementation. We are only in charge of controlling the preparations and so forth. However, this is a sign of particular trust. And I am certain that later on, no one will dare shove me to do this dangerous work of organizing our underground. I hope that I will be immediately sent to the west -- somewhere in Switzerland, for example, where I will surely keep the secret of this operation, naturally, with all conveniences for a proper life guaranteed."

"Are you in a hurry to run away?" Weiss asked.

"This is necessary in the interest of highly placed individuals who have signed this order which, as a diplomat says, is not for publication. On the contrary: Goebbels will publish in the newspapers descriptions of the criminal attacks of the allied air force on the concentration camps. You and I, as witnesses of this horrible attack, will be able to confirm his words."

"So, you wish to remain alive?" Weiss asked.

"And how," smiled Dietrich smile. "Comfortably!"

Colonel Walter, commander of the special aviation unit, bearer of the knight iron cross, a flyer since the first world war, a thin, gray and short man with a tremendously arrogant face, opened the secret package. Reading the order and attached instructions, he looked at Weiss and Dietrich with a distaste as though these SD officers had not tightened up their belts and asked for one hour in which to consider, after which he was ready once again to meet with the officers.

Dietrich let Weiss take care of everything and went to have lunch with the young flyers.

Despite his obvious enmity, the colonel had to discuss with Weiss the details of the operation.

"Fuel?" the colonel said. "The Bolsheviks are advancing. In a week they may be here." He packed his small foot in a lacquered old-fashioned pointed boot. "We have today no more fuel than is necessary to get out of here."

"But you were expected to receive fuel!"

"Tomorrow evening, if the gasoline trucks could reach here."

"Why would they not?"

"The Russians bombed the bridges."

"Pontoon bridges could be built."

"Yes, if they could be laid there."

"Where?" Weiss asked.

The colonel pointed at the map. Then he said:

"I considered that my duty was to take all the men on the planes and therefore, the planes were not loaded with bombs. They have to be sent to the depots. That will take time."

"Naturally," Weiss agreed.

"Something else," angrily said the colonel. "In addition to everything -- here is this order issued by Kaltenbrunner: I am in charge of throwing with parachutes containers with poisonous substances to be used by the camp SS Units in the case that any of the inmates would remain alive after the bombing."

"Quite a foresight," Weiss pointed out.

"Listen," angrily said the colonel. "I am a flying ace of the First World War. My name is known in France and England. I have downed 28 planes, honorably."

"So what?" Weiss asked.

"I am a soldier," the colonel said. "A soldier. I have my military beliefs and principles. And you are Gestapo..."

"I am a SD officer."

"I do not see any substantial difference."

"In a word, you are trying to tell me that you are not particularly happy with your assignment?"

"This is not a combat assignment, this is not for a soldier."

"And what is it?"

"You know very well yourself, what it is."

"You are simply scared. You are afraid that the consequences for you will be that you will be treated not as a captured officer but as a military criminal."

"Yes," the colonel said. "I am not afraid to die, even to be shot by the Bolsheviks. But I do not wish to be hung alive."

"As whom?" Weiss asked.

"As, for example, you could be."

"Would you like to decline the assignment?"

"I am a soldier, and I am obeying an order."

"Yet orders are not discussed."

"With subordinates, they are not. You are not my subordinate."

Weiss looked straight into the colonel's eyes.

"I am grateful to you for having expressed your opinion so honestly and frankly."

"Which you will use in accordance with the type and spirit of your service?"

"No," Weiss said. "You have simply forced me to start thinking about this and that."

After that conversation, Weiss remained with the colonel but talked to him about everything except the preparations for the operation. That is exactly the way the colonel behaved.

Through his contact, Weiss reported to the group the time in which the trucks with gasoline were expected to arrive and pointed on the map where the pontoon bridge and bomb depot were, as well as the road leading from the depot to the airfield.

Weiss looked over two shelters which were now used as a storage for the toxic substances; in addition to bottled gas, this included cases with poison in injections and boxes. In the course of one of his investigations, he was able to put among the cases a heat cartridge with a delayed action fuse, shaped as a plastic cigarette box.

One day later, the entire personnel, en masse, was fighting the fire in the shelter. Then, another 24 hours were needed before the people could go back to the airfield without the danger of being poisoned. In a radius of almost two kilometers around, the leaves of trees yellowed and withered.

One day later, the colonel called Weiss to himself and reported to him that the pontoon bridge had been blasted and that the bomb carriers could not cross until it was rebuilt; furthermore, a convoy of trucks with bombs, going from the depot to the airfield, had been fired at. The trucks had been made inoperative, and some of them had exploded with their load.

Waving his hands, he said, with false regrets:

"So, I cannot carry out your order within the indicated deadline."

Dietrich was raving. He tried to get in touch with Berlin.

Weiss was told by his comrade to leave the airport for that night. Yet he was unable to do so: Dietrich did not leave him for a second. He told Weiss:

"You planned the operation with the colonel, and you are responsible for its failure." He threatened: "I will report you. The officers will confirm that you kept me away from drafting the operation."

Weiss was given a separate room but now, he was joined by Dietrich. Before going to bed, he locked the door and put the key in his pocket, saying that he was afraid of diversionists. He put his gun under his pillow.

That night, Soviet dive and bomber planes attacked the airfield.

Weiss ran out to the side of the airfield, where he had noticed trenches dug by the guards. He was followed by Dietrich.

The trench was half filled with dirt. Dietrich pushed Weiss out of its deeper parts. Noticing the shelter, he decided to reach a more reliable cover, and jumped out. A bomb exploded. Weiss was almost buried under. He dug himself out. Dietrich's feet were sticking out. Weiss grabbed him by the feet and pulled him into the trench. A bomb splinter had opened his stomach. Weiss started bandaging him but ran out of bandages. Dietrich opened his eyes. He looked at his wound, frowned in disgust and then started crying.

Weiss took off his jacket and tore his shirt: when bombs started blasting again, he almost mechanically bent over Dietrich, protecting him with his body, preventing any dirt from falling on the wound. Dietrich noticed this. He mumbled:

"Johann, you are possibly a good man. However, I have informed on you." He moaned, in a condemning tone of voice: "How could you, a German, become a traitor?"

"What have you informed?" Weiss asked, carefully putting his jacket under Dietrich's head.

Dietrich said, in a whisper:

"Brigitte's husband was a Russian diversionist. You were always with him. This was reported just before our trip, by a Russian prisoner of war who had been accused of stealing valuables during the rescue work."

"Why wasn't I arrested then immediately?"

Dietrich sighed.

"Lansdorf did not believe me. He said that I wanted to settle my accounts with you for some of my unseemly actions you had found out, remember?"

"I remember," Weiss said.

"Well, you see... He did not trust me... He only asked me to watch you. He would have faced even greater difficulties if you had turned out to be a traitor. For this reason, he blamed me for everything, and ordered me to watch you..." Dietrich stopped, obviously fighting an unbearable pain. "When both of us were having our showers, I came out, pretending that I wasn't feeling well. I found in your jacket a cigarette box." There was another long silence. Weiss remained silent. "I know these things," whispered Dietrich. "Then, when the shelter caught fire, you no longer had this cigarette box. You still have not got it. True?"

"Yes," confirmed Weiss.

"You see," boasted Dietrich, his tongue already sluggish. "I'm a good counteragent, yes?"

"Why are you telling me all this? So that I would kill you?"

"Yes, naturally, ... I do not wish to suffer. I will not be able to stand it. Please, Johann, I cannot look at my innards. Well?"

Weiss took out a cigarette, and smoked.

In a stream, the dive planes were flowing over the airfield and the brilliant shower of their large caliber machine guns hit the concrete strip, lighting long blue sparks.

Weiss said:

"No, I will not kill you, Dietrich. On the contrary: I will now go and send for medics with a stretcher. The likes of you should not die immediately. You should really feel what death is. You have killed others but considered that this would not happen to you. If you were to die, in any case, you will die comfortably, in your bed. I will see to it that you get these facilities."

He stood up and asked: "You hear me, Dietrich, I am going to fetch the medics."

Dietrich did not answer.

Weiss touched his shoulder. Dietrich's head shook but his eyes remained fixed. Weiss took his jacket, put it on and started for the burning airfield.

The attack had ended.

The colonel was commanding the fire extinction operations. He was strong, energetic and issued ferociously orders.

Weiss said:

"I must leave you, colonel."

"Yes?" the colonel asked, looking at him as though he had never seen him before. "Well, you are not my subordinate, otherwise I would have ordered you to work." He waved his hand in the direction in which the planes were burning and where machine gun belts and shells were exploding in them.

Weiss found his car and got out of the airfield. Then, he stopped. He came out of the car and removed its license plate. The automobile was burnt up and covered with ashes. Its color could no longer be seen. Leaving the highway, Weiss started driving along a dirt road through the forest, turned, after 16 crossroads. At the 17th, he left the car in a thicket and started walking.

As his connection had pointed out, he came out to a little clearing. He went down a small ravine along which flowed a stream and drank.

He felt uneasy. He had fallen asleep. Stuthoff said: "Zubov is not very careful in his work. What about him?" How could he have allowed such an error with the cigarette box?

When learning that Dietrich was to accompany him, he should have thought of something more basic and, therefore, less traceable than the cigarette box. Why had he missed on that? Because the entire time he was thinking of Zubov and had stopped thinking of himself. Yet he could not prevent but think of Zubov who, carrying out his assignment, had condemned himself to death.."

Two men in SS uniform, with automatic weapons hanging on their chests, came out of the bushes. As agreed upon, each one had a pine sprig on his lapel. Weiss said the password, received an answer and went on, walking between both Germans. Their faces were gray, frowning. Weiss understood: they were former inmates--anti-fascists, or perhaps even communists.

A hunting lodge showed up, in a Gothic style, with a rooster on the top of a sharp pointed wooden roof. Weiss was led into a spacious room with a brick fireplace, the walls covered with deer antlers. Behind the table, looking at a map was a Soviet officer in a proper, as though just laundered uniform.

He stretched his hand, and presented himself:

"Major Kolosov." He smiled embarrassedly: "Excuse me, just a formality: your identification."

Weiss gave him his identification signed by Himmler, Müller, Keitel and Kaltenbrunner. The major looked at it, gave it back and said respectfully:

"A collector's item. Well, then, once again hello, Comrade Belov." He warmly took his hand and pointed at a chair. "Sit down, please." He offered a package of "kasbek" cigarettes. "Smoke!"

Weiss tenderly took a cigarette.

"Pre-war?"

The major rebuked him:

"You are behind your time! These are post-blockade, from Leningrad." He pointed at the map with his pencil. "So, here is the situation: the approaches are open. But first, what are your considerations?..."

After discussing the operation plan, Weiss left the hunting lodge accompanied by the major.

In the yard, he saw the Soviet parachutist in army uniform, and also lined up, men wearing German uniforms or civilian clothes.

"That is it," pointed at them the major. "Our entire international personnel. This, so to say, not yet our last but our most decisive battle. We must free over 12,000 men with the least possible losses. Your group is at that wing," he pointed out. "I recommend that no time be lost. Get acquainted, have a chat and, off we go." He said: "It will be quite desirable if you would make an accurate timetable."

Weiss went in the direction indicated. Four men wearing the uniform of SS officers stood up from the bench at his approach. Weiss knew two of them: the Czech Ptashek and the underground worker Mekhov. They greeted each other like friends. The other two presented themselves. One was a blonde athlete, Walter Koch. The other was a dark very muscular and bright looking man -- Hans Schmidt.

"Where are you from?" Weiss asked.

Koch, smiling, reported:

"Free Germany."

"Were you a prisoner?"

"No. Berlin. Clandestinity." He nodded toward Schmidt, and said respectfully: "He worked with Anton Zefkov."

Weiss discussed the operative plan with his group. It was as follows:

According to data obtained via Henrich, the supplies for those of the underground concentration camp were to last for two more days. Therefore, the liquidation was to take place after that time.

However, if the Soviet Army was to move faster in that direction, the SS in charge had the right to hasten with the destruction of the camp. It was not excluded, also, that a special order may be issued by the leaders of the SD to this effect.

There was no doubt that the SS in charge would have a link, from the commanding center, to the explosive center and, following his signal, the engineers would put in action the

electric powered explosives, the wires of which would be strung in the mine to the explosive dumps. Therefore, the engineers' position would be on the surface. The task was to find their location and render them harmless. Once this was done, join the capturing group which would be commanded by Major Kolosov. The group was to get into the mine, dismantle the explosives and release the inmates. A part of the major's group was to remain on the surface, take defense positions and cover the unit operating underground.

It was with the people of this group, wearing German officer uniforms that Weiss reached the point marked on the map as being the defense staff of the camp, its administrative center and finished goods warehouse.

Colonel Robert Steiner, the SS representative, received Weiss at his command center.

He was an elderly man, with a flat face and angular head, with a so-called Hindenberg haircut which consisted of hair parted in the middle, and almost shaved rear and sides; he had thin lips and penetrating eyes with wincing eyelids. Around his neck he wore the Knight Iron Cross.

He looked carefully at Weiss's identification and threw it on the table. "What?" said Steiner, as though Weiss had asked him something.

Weiss, crossing his legs, in turn, also asked:

"What 'what'?"

"... Are you interested in?" said Steiner.

"I would like to make sure that there is nothing of interest to me here."

"Why?"

"That would be the case if everything is in order here."

"Do you have anything specific in mind?"

"Yes," said Weiss, snapping his fingers. "That is it, precisely!"

"Equipment?"

"What is the matter with you!" Weiss smiled. "That is not my field. If you assure me that everything is in excellent

shape; that is all I need to report."

"To whom?"

"Obviously, one of those who has signed my document."

"Directly? Are you a sort of trusted man?"

"No," Weiss said. "I will submit my report along official channels."

"Strange!"

"What precisely?"

"I am not being trusted!" burst out Stiner. "I personally talked to Himmler and Haltenbrunner before coming here. I told them," Stiner's chest swelled, "that that was a high honor to me." He looked down. Weiss saw the button fixed on the table, covered with a metal bracket, locked with a nickel-plated padlock. "A high honor," repeated Stiner. "All I have is to move my hand and I will do my duty to the Reich. We will close those doors, coming out, in such a way that the Bolsheviks will shudder with horror." He added: "Yet your presence here is a proof that I am not trusted. I will protest." He put his hand on the telephone receiver.

"By the way, colonel," Weiss said, "when you ring up Berlin please report that out of eight camps I have already visited five. And that everything was in order."

Still holding the receiver, Stiner asked:

"So, you did not come especially to see me?"

"Not at all!" Weiss smiled. "My order is to report on all eight camps. Yours is the sixth. I have two more to visit." He complained: "I am quite tired. Do you think that it is easy to be one's legs all day? Some camps have already been evacuated and the liquidation is taking place during the march, the corpses are being left on the road." He asked: "Have you tried driving on corpses?"

"Not yet." Stiner said. "Yet if they cover the roads, we will have to do it..." He looked at Weiss somewhat more sympathetically. "I can assure you that I will not leave such disorder behind me."

"Very well," Weiss made a motion as though he intended to leave. "So, that is what I will report."

"Did you come for this alone?"

Weiss looked at his watch and shrugged.

"What else? That is all." He reminded him: "I have two more camps!"

"You shouldn't do this," said Steiner reprovingly. "Why don't you have lunch with me. Let me give the orders."

The colonel left the room.

Instantly, Weiss cut off the wire leading to the padlocked button.

When the colonel returned, Weiss said:

"Allow me to tell the officers accompanying me that I will be delayed."

"Why do it personally? I will send my adjutant, he will transmit your order."

Weiss lowered his voice:

"Very confidentially, I believe that a special party man is among the people accompanying me. He was sent by the party office. I am afraid that he may consider himself insulted that your adjutant might transmit any orders on my behalf. I better tell him this myself. Excuse me, but if I were to act otherwise, I may have troubles."

"Well, invite him too."

"Do me a favor, invite him yourself." He added significantly: "I would presume that this man might be useful to you too."

"Well, why not." Steiner put his cap on.

Together with Steiner, Weiss approached the car parked by the warehouse. His people did not come out.

Weiss said, opening the door:

"SS representative, I have the honor to present."

Condescendingly smiling, Steiner came close to the open door. Weiss hit him on the neck with his palm. Steiner fell down, face first, inside. Four pairs of hands picked him up and put him instantaneously inside the car.

Weiss took out a cigarette, lit it, and waited. From the car, someone gave him a key ring. Weiss took it, put it in his pocket and went back to Steiner's office. He found the file with the mark familiar to him, took some papers out of it, put them under his uniform and left. He got into the car, gave Mekhov a sheet on which the positions of the engineers were indicated, and said:

"Figure it out."

Pteshek and Koch held solidly under their feet the tied Steiner, lying on the floor with his hat stuffed in his mouth.

"Let us go," said Weiss to Schmidt, who was driving.

Mekhov who studied during the trip the explosion plan, told Major Kolosov:

"We could cut the wire leading from the engineers' location to the galleries. When the explosion machines fail to work, a group will be sent to follow the wire. We will ambush them. However, we could hold them for no more than half an hour. The garrison here is probably large."

"So," the major said, "and then?"

"Then, the cover group will start fighting. Our last line of defense will be in the area of the exit from the galleries, until we manage to take the people out."

"Twelve thousand," the major reminded him. "We should estimate how long we will have to hold on."

"That would be a difficult estimate," Mekhov said. "The people are weak. That also must be taken into consideration." He put a finger on the point marking the exit from the shafts. "Look: there are shelters for the guards here not yet removed. This is an entire line that has to be eliminated. It would be impossible to do so noiselessly. Therefore, the entire garrison will be drawn here."

"This is correct," the major agreed. "You will have to remain on the surface."

"Why?"

"Mine the approaches."

"I object," Mekhov said. "I am the most qualified man here. Who will deactivate the mines in the shafts?"

"True," the major agreed. "Well, then, give instructions to those who will remain on the surface."

"That would be possible."

Even though it would have been best of all to begin the operation at night, the major ordered that the starting positions be assumed immediately.

No one interrogated Steiner. The Hauptsturmführer, it seemed, went crazy from despair or hatred. At first, he seemed to be in a state of hysterics. And then went into a state of prostration, his eyes turned, his mouth half opened as that of an idiot. He reeked. He was even unable to sit up, falling off his chair unless held.

"If he is pretending he is doing it very well," said the major looking at him. "You don't have to be a specialist to see that he has gone mad. A typical case."

The entrance into the mine began with a shaft dug into the slope of a mount to which narrow gauge tracks led.

When the entire unit of the parachutists noiselessly gathered around the approaches to the shaft, the combat group in SS uniforms under Weiss's command started marching in step toward the tunnel.

An SS man with a rank of Rotenführer came out of the tunnel, and ordered them to stop. Pairs of machine guns were visible from the gun ports of two reinforced bunkers.

Weiss continued to march ahead of the group, as though he had not heard the warning. Looking at the machine guns, aimed at him, he felt as though he were a gigantic target for them.

He stopped the group some 15 meters away from the pillboxes. He shouted with all his strength:

"Rotenführer, come here!"

When the latter took a few uncertain steps, he ordered him, motioning to the men:

"Take command!"

Hesitatingly, the Rotenfuehrer said:

"But, Hauptsturmfuehrer, these are not my men."

"Take command!" Weiss repeated. Passing by the confused Rotenfuehrer into the tunnel, he complained: "Heat, dust... water." He began cleaning the dust off his uniform with his kid gloves. He ordered: "Line up your men!" He added, smiling in a friendly fashion: "I am about to read an order issued by the Fuehrer granting awards in honor of his birthday." He explained: "This ceremony must be done on the spot, not to interrupt the service."

The Rotenfuehrer blew a whistle and his unit came out and lined up.

Weiss ordered his men to take over. He himself, standing on the pillbox, turned with a speech to the unit lined up in front of him. When the line of parachutists came closer, suddenly interrupting his speech, Weiss said calmly and business-like:

"Now, surrender!"

He jumped from the pillbox and flattened himself behind it.

However, these were not simple soldiers but chosen SS troops. They tried to fight and only four of them voluntarily surrendered.

After the engagement was over, glancing at his watch, the major told Weiss:

"Well, it's in the open. As of this minute, our operation is no longer a secret to the Germans. So, hold on!"

A part of the parachutists unit took the defense positions around the exit from the mine. The other dug in about a kilometer away. Five men, taking the explosive machine, followed Mekhov in the tunnel.

A few minutes later, they ran out. Mekhov ordered:

"Away from the tunnel!"

He removed himself away, and sat down, breathing heavily. A soft, dull explosion shook the ground. Piles of dust and stones came out of the tunnel. Pulling his cap down, Mekhov happily said:

"All in order! We opened it. Now, the tripkitsclf with all its surprises begins." He warned: "Until the lantern begins to blink, the semaphore will be closed, and you can rest." He motioned to the parachutists and the engineers: "Let us go."

The attack group which was to go into the shafts consisted of seven men only. The major remained on the surface, to command the defense. Weiss, said, that he had inadequate army experience, and will follow the attack group. The major considered:

"Well, it seems reasonable. However, I will give you a radio operator. We must keep in touch and the communications men are needed here: the wires are stringing to the units." He winked: "A girl as good as gold."

"What do you mean?" Weiss asked.

"Like you, she worked in the enemy rear." He waved his hand. "Run, she will catch up with you!"

Together with Ptashek and the young parachutists, he crawled through the opening in the wall where Mekhov with the two engineers had disappeared. Carrying their lanterns, they moved ahead in the dry stuffy darkness, filled with the stench of oil and cordite from the recent explosion.

They followed the narrow gauge tracks, their steps echoing under the tunnel roof. At the elevator, one of Mekhov's engineers said:

"Using the elevator would be dangerous. What if it is mined? We better go down the stairs."

A rusty iron wet staircase went down the mine. It was here that the radio girl caught up with them; a portable radio set with a fine antenna hung on her shoulders.

"Ah," the radio girl said, "how inconvenient it will be to go down!" She explained: "You see, I am wearing a skirt. Let me be the first so that you will not have to wait for me."

"You didn't dress properly for the occasion," the miner blamed her.

Kaden'ka -- it was she -- nodded at Weiss as though she had literally seen him only yesterday. She smiled and started going down, warning them:

"Please, be careful with my antenna."

The lower they went, the heavier the air became, foul, raw, as though sticking to the skin as mold.

Several times, they heard some tight and resounding blasts. The miner explained:

"Apparently, Comrade Mekhov is mining other walls." He sighed: "They have walled in the people on many places. That is the explanation."

They reached the level where the shaft began. They heard explosions again and smelled the burning explosives. Suddenly, there was another blast and then a soft falling sound.

Weiss ran ahead and, reaching the place of the last explosion, he saw the dead face of the miner. Another one was holding his face in his hands.

Mekhov sat on the floor between them and carefully stretched with his wounded left hand the safety fuse, one end of which he held between his teeth.

Kaden'ka dropped on her knees in front of him and opened her medicine bag. Moving away from her, Mekhov ordered:

"Take care of them first! I told them: there is a trick here. No, one had to crawl with wire cutters!" He told Belov: "Here. I got off cheap, I saved my head." He tried to stand up, leaned against the wall, he saw the dead miner. His face twisted and his voice shook: "What a boy we lost." He is worth one and a half men, in one year he would have been an engineer." He took a shaky step to the other one whose face was wounded, asked him: "Can you see? Well, then, everything is all right." He advised him: "Anyway, you keep your hand on your cheek until the blood dries. Later, they will sew it up." He boasted: "The surgeons have rebuilt me: the bones on my

feet are made of silver."

Nadya bandaged Mekhov, and said:

"You must rest a bit."

"Later," Mekhov shook his hand. "At the hospital. No facilities here, no service." Leaning on Nadya's shoulder, and dragging his feet, he went ahead.

Soon, they heard the sound of voices and blows as though something heavy was striking against iron. They walked along time, finally reaching a heavy metal grid through which no more than a hand could pass.

"Comrades!" shouted Nuden'ka, "comrades!"

Hundreds of hands were thrust through the grid. Nadya tried to shake them off. Mekhov shouted:

"Hooray, comrades!" Weak, he sat on the stone floor of the shaft; his head bent over his chest. He said guiltily: "This was not weakness but emotion. That is what such feelings lead to."

He went to the grid, started looking at it, but the hands of the people prevented him. He called Weiss, and shrieked in his ear, above the din of the people behind the grid:

"It could be blasted open! However, first there must be discipline so that all those citizens behind the grid would go as far of it as possible and, secondly, they are fighting outside. We must get in touch with the major."

Weiss called Nadya. They went at some distance from the grid. She switched on the radio and put on her earphones.

"What do you want me to say?"

Weiss said:

"Describe our circumstances and ask them what the situation is there."

Nadya waited a while and then complained that reception was very poor. It was quite difficult to communicate underground.

"Still, what are they saying?"

"I could catch a few words: '... hot...all in the shelter...artillery.' "

"So," Weiss said. "Clear."

The parachutists tried to calm down the people but they could not cutshort them. Weiss asked Nadya:

"Could you get any other more powerful station?"

"A more powerful one, naturally."

"It would be good if you got Music," Weiss said. "They will begin to listen and will quiet down. Clear?"

"I will try."

"I am not sure, however..." Weiss said.

After a while, quiet sounds of music from an unidentified radio station were heard.

First, those who were the closest to the grid became quiet. Gradually, all of them, the entire huge human mass... Then, Belov approached the grid and shouted as loud as he could:

"Comrades! I ask all of you to remove yourselves from the grid, it would be best to go into the side shaft, you probably have them. If we are to open the grid, we have to blast it." He asked: "Did you understand me?"

It was probably every man who said very quietly:

"Yes."

However, this resounded in the shaft so loudly, said by thousands of voices, that it sounded like the softened echo of an underground landslide.

Weiss waited for the din to abate and said:

"Comrades, we are sure that you will be able to behave in an organized manner, as befits Soviet people." He shouted: "Let the leaders remain by the grid, and the others go to your shelter."

There was noise and the sound of feet. Then, only five human hands remained by the grid. Weiss approached, shook each one and repeated what had to be done with each one of these people.

people. He added:

"Please."

Having put the charges wherever was needed, the paratroopers picked up the weakening Mekhov and retreated. Mekhov was a heavy man, yet they had to carry him upwards since the shaft at this point was slanted.

Reaching a certain height, they stopped and stretched behind the handcars filled with barrels of cement and blocks of stone which apparently were used for the building of the bulkheads of the shafts.

An explosion was heard a few minutes later, and the air blast was so strong that the handcars were pushed back, the props used to break them were pushed out of the tracks and the freight cars began at first slowly, and then gathering speed, started rolling down the slope toward the place where, through the break in the grid, a dense mass of thousands of people was streaming.

Weiss jumped and started running parallel with the first car, trying to put a piece of wood under the wheels but the wood was hurled out of his hands. Then, Weiss took a hand grenade, removed the metal cover which would have exploded into thousands of splinters, pulled the pin, and, two seconds later, threw it between the tracks, hurling himself against the wall of the shaft, face down and covering his head with his hands.

The blast got the first handcar out of the tracks and the others piled on it, in a mass of iron and stone.

Broken stone fell on Weiss from the car, crushing one of his hands. The handcar leaned on the side, threatening to crush Weiss.

Where could these people dying of hunger, thirst and lack of air find the strength, the will and organization rapidly to choose a few dozen of the strongest among them and teach them how to do the only thing which was possible? Some of them crawled between the cars and the walls of the shaft and, held the handcar with their bodies. Others, meanwhile, removed the stones which had fallen on Johann and freed him, bloody, unconscious.

Bending over Johann, Nadya sadly said:

"He is breathing, comrades, but he needs air. He needs

"air." The people moved back, literally providing space for the air to reach him.

Combined SS guard units were buried in the battle against the Soviet parachutists. They knew quite well how to kill, capture, and deal with partisans. They accurately estimate the number of covers, ammunition, and airplane sorties so that each meter in the line of partisan defenses received no less than a hundred shrapnels or machine gun bullets.

However, the parachute unit consisted of soldiers each one of whom was thoroughly familiar with the art of independent combat. Those were masters of military affairs, they had taken part in many battles.

The famous sniper Boris Vekkin was shooting with a serious expression on his severe and intelligent face. His movements were slow, soft and quite graceful. He looked into the telescope with the same careful curiosity as once when he studied to be a microbiologist, he had looked at the microscope.

He was wounded but had realized that if no other bullet would hit him, he would have enough strength to hold on his sniper position: the point was not to change it but to remain where he was, hugging the earth.

The mine throwing unit, on the contrary, changed positions to prevent the enemy from using it as a target. The soldiers crawled pulling behind them, tied to their legs, the parts and the ammunition boxes. The parachutists engaged in defense operations were armed with submachine guns and automatic weapons. When the enemy came closer they used the automatic weapons. Each group had its ammunition runners.

The parachutists had been unable to mine the approaches secretly. They simply placed mines around and stretched to their trenches pieces of wire attached to the fuze. When the enemy closed up, they pulled the wires and the mines exploded.

The wounded were pulled into the tunnel, on tarpaulin. This was completely thoroughly planned and organized as though a workshop operating in the open. If only the people in this "shop" were not being killed and the machinery not destroyed with mines and shells!

Commanding the battle, Major Kolosov, kept looking at his watch. The tank landing was slow. He saw how the fire of the parachutists was weakening. He listened to the explosion of hand grenades, meaning that close combat was beginning. He picked up the telephone and ordered the commander of the heavy machine gun emplacement:

"Yegorov, go to the left flank, it is getting hot there!"

Through his binoculars he saw the parachutists retreat to the second line of defense. The radio man came to him and told him that the people in the shaft were requesting permission to come out.

"Impossible," the major said.

"Absolutely not." He added, after a while: "Let them send up a dozen of the stronger ones. We could use a reserve."

After a while, fifteen camp inmates, accompanied by a parachutist and Nadya, came out of the mine. They brought up the wounded, and put them closer to the chit, to give them fresh air. Nadya sat down next to Belov, unbuttoned his jacket and put her hand on his chest. The heart was beating. Yet when he removed her hand, it was red with blood.

The faces and bodies of the inmates were black from the mine dust. They were so thin that they seemed flattened, literally the shadows of people as though projected by lantern. One of them said:

"Major, beg to report." He put his bony knees together, standing to attention.

The major nodded.

"We are ready to fight!"

"All right," the major agreed. "Do not hurry, one at a time, to the fire line, forward march!" He added, smiling: "Thank you, comrades, for the help."

Rain started falling. However, rain could not put out the fire of the uneven battle. Strength was needed for that. Yet that of the parachutists was nearing its end... The major ordered the radio man:

"Call the air force! Let them do something. They are holding back the landing, and I am suffering losses."

The radio man reported:

"...orders. We must withdraw in 10 minutes. They would also like to hit us and split. They would like us to mark the front line with flares."

"All right," the major agreed. "We will!"

In the two hours in the continuous rain, there was a rumble in the sky. It was the tanks which discharged their loads, driving a high hit. They were followed by the attack planes pouring their fire on the ground.

The aviator was still at work but the major, gun in hand, without hurrying, went to meet the parachutists who had landed somewhat on the side. A few minutes after the last plane disappeared, the parachutists jumped out of their shelters and went after the enemy on the bomb-shattered earth.

The battle was finished by the tank company which had been held back at the crossing. Major Kolosov was wounded. However, he was able to issue all necessary instructions to the commander of the tank unit, a lieutenant.

"So, you have been assigned to us now."

The tankman looked at his watch and smiled:

"We are no longer landing troops."

"Why?"

"We are a tank unit in the rear. Our front line is already 30 kilometers ahead of here. In other words, we are on liberated territory."

"Very well," the major said. He smiled: "It is difficult to avoid the army now."

"Cooperation," the tankman explained. "Your job was four targets, ours was everything around it."

In a long line, the camp inmates came out of the tunnel. They marched, leaning on one another, their chins up. They marched on and on in an endless winging column.

The lieutenant raised a hand in saluting. Kolosov also tried to stand up and put a hand to his cap.

The inmates were surrounded by people they had chosen to guide their clandestine organizations.

The column lined up and on order, stood to attention. However, no matter how hard the people tried, the line moved. It was quiet; one could hear their hoarse breathing.

"Comrades!" said the tankman. "Excuse us, "we were slow..."

"Make a speech," the major said. "You should..."

The lieutenant took off his helmet. He had a young face. Frowning, short of breath, he said:

"Everything, comrades, everything! I swear we will never let such a thing happen again on earth." He ran toward them, and hugged the nearest one of them.

"Well, we could make a meeting out of this," said the major. He lay back on the stretcher and with an already fading voice, gave orders as to how to feed and distribute the liberated people.

They found a German hospital near the camps and in the forest, which the Germans had not been able to evacuate entirely. The wounded were sent there, including Kolosov and Belov, who had still not regained consciousness. The hospital was turned over to medical battalion of a Soviet mobilized unit which had entered this area.

Nadya was no longer here. All she had the time for was to have another look at Belov, lying immobile on his bed. The battle was being waged at the approaches to Berlin. The girl was worried about her father and, furthermore, Soviet army intelligence needed her.

Severely wounded, Major Kolosov was taken from the German hospital to an army hospital. Kolosov was only able to tell the head of the hospital that the wounded Johann Weiss was a very important man and that special care had to be taken of him.

Weiss could not come to. He had a brain concussion. He could not be transported.

The political officer of the hospital was given a report to the effect that documents of an SD officer had been found in Weiss's uniform, with special passes signed by Himmler, Mueller, Keitel and Kaltenbrunner. The political officer reported this to the head of the special section. The latter said:

"So, the major reported accurately. This is an important predatory bird. The moment he is better, we will interrogate him." He warned: "Everything properly, however. As humanely as possible."

From the shock, Weiss's eye nerves had been damaged. He was almost blind. He was operated by an eye surgeon called from the front. He told the treating physician that the patient needed absolute rest, no irritation, including visual.

The treating physician knew German. Nurses were found who also spoke German. Everything possible was done to avoid any "irritation" for the wounded SD officer. He was put in a separate room.

Regaining consciousness, Weiss began slowly to think. Where was he? Perhaps, he had been wounded during the attack on the airfield and Dietrich had betrayed him. Now, German physicians were trying to protect his life so that, later the Gestapo could slowly take it away, drop by drop... Everything else was blurred. Everything except Dietrich's admission which had remained engraved in his mind. This burned him. So, he, Weiss, had made a basic error, he had made it on the eve of a job on which the life of many thousands of people depended. This persistent thought, and the emotional suffering which it created, worsened even further his already bad state of health.

Weiss's recollections stopped with Dietrich's statement that he will report him because of the suspicion of Zubov and because Weiss had been seen with Zubov. This might have been the day Brigitte had died, when he was waiting for Weiss at Bismarckstrasse, near the secret location of the special group of foreign SD intelligence. Weiss recalled how shaken up Zubov was with Brigitte's death. Yet he, himself, was never afraid of death, never thought of it.

Now, Weiss could see, as though coming out of a fog, Zubov's face, when he was throwing his parachute out of the plane. All the time, Johann saw that face, its embarrassed smile. It was as though Zubov literally apologized to him that now he had to die.

What if he could save himself? Zubov was not a man to surrender to death without a struggle. What if he had been able to find a way out and saved himself? He would then return back to Berlin and would be arrested following Dietrich's report. Then, the Gestapo executioners would hasty and thoroughly investigate him. Him, the powerful young man capable of withstanding the most horrible torture, which would soon kill any weaker man. Zubov would be unable to die and, therefore, his pain would be endless. All the time, Weiss thought of Zubov.

Zubov also thought of Weiss. He remembered Johann's worried and surprised face. That is why he hastily closed the door, to cut himself off from Johann, not to subject him to useless danger -- the motion on his face was quite clear.

When the plane took off, Zubov darkly looked at the backs of the passengers -- the SS representatives. He made his way to the rear and took his place by a big caliber machine gun smelling of lubricant. Through the plexiglass dome, he saw a bit of sky. He felt cramped. "Comfortable as in a grave," he thought mockingly.

The trip was to last 17 minutes. The clock mechanism of the mine had been timed for 15 minutes from the time that the acid capsule was to break. Zubov pulled out of his holder a flat mine and hung it in a specially prepared holder under his left armpit. This was almost unnoticeable against his powerful chest.

Then, he started speculating as to what would have Johann done in his place. He was unable to figure anything out.

The sky was dark, cloudy. It was as though a stream of moisture fell off the plexiglass dome. It was dark as in a pit.

He counted the passengers and the members of the crew. There were too many. One could try, but it would have been hardly sensible. He could cope with the passengers perhaps. However, there was a metal door between him and the cockpit. If he started to shoot at the pilot first, the aim would be inaccurate. The pilot would be able to jump out and kill him before he could cope with all the Gestapo men. Anyone of those, if he were to remain alive, carried an order for the destruction of dozens of thousands of people. Even if only two were to remain alive, many thousands of people would die. So, the only thing left was the mine. That would work all right.

Yet he still had to break the capsule half an hour before the landing. If it would fail, this could happen. Then, during the remaining fifteen minutes, he would be able to eliminate a number of SS men, until killed himself. That was the most logical thing. That is what Weiss would have done.

Zubov took out a cigarette. He wanted to smoke, but recalled that it was forbidden and, reluctantly, put the cigarette back. This duel with the passengers was not necessary. If the mine failed, he would start fighting. The bullets on the band alternated -- armor-piercing and incendiary. So, everything would be in order.

He gave a sigh of relief. Once again, he wanted to smoke. He recalled the time in the Ghetto, when he was lying that hot, and couldn't breathe. Then, he remembered the young man feeding him the belts when he was firing from the house set afire by the fascists and from whose window the people were being thrown out and killed.

The young man had asked Zubov:

"What are you, a Pole?"

"No, a Russian."

The young man had looked at him amazed.

"You are lying. True, are you a Soviet? How can you prove it?"

Zubov gave an accurate burst at the fascists. He turned and asked:

"Did you see?" He explained: "That is my main proof."

Then, when the young man was wounded mortally, he asked Zubov:

"I have cigarettes in my pocket. Take them."

"No need," Zubov said, "I will do without."

"Please," the boy whispered through bluish lips: "You will shy taking them afterwards, from a dead man... You have to smoke, you are a smoker."

... Zubov cleaned with his hand the steamy dome but no light came. Once, in the dark, Brigitta for some reason asked him not to light a cigarette. She told Zubov, putting her hands on his shoulders and touching him with her already noticeable belly:

"One day, everything will be all right."

"It's not too bad now either," Zubov said.

"But not the way you want it." She promised: "But everything will be as you want." She closed her eyes and asked in a whisper: "How do you say mother in Russian?"

"I don't know." Zubov freed himself from Brigitta's hands.

So, already then she was guessing, but how? Perhaps, she heard him now, at night, turning on the receiver, he was listening to Moscow. He had concealed this weakness of his from Weiss. Had Weiss known this... Zubov felt uncomfortable.

Suddenly, a penetrating sound interfered with the resonant noise of the motors. Zubov saw the narrow outline of an Air Cobra and the thread of machine gun bullets.

He grabbed his machine gun, aiming it so as not to hit the fighter. Then, he pressed on the trigger. The endless empty belt piled around him, as the steel ingot out of a Martin furnace.

Zubov eagerly waited for a new attack. However, shaking up, the plane whirled as though it was falling. Zubov abandoned his position. In the compartment, the wind was whistling through the cracks made by the bullets. One of the passengers was slumped in his seat. The others, pale, holding on to the supports, remained almost motionless.

Zubov went into the cockpit. The dome had been pierced by bullets on several places. The radio man and the right seat pilot were dead -- one was in his seat and the other one his head leaning against the broken panel of the radio. The left seat pilot was wounded. One of his hands was hanging useless, his face was cut by plexiglass splinters. Seeing Zubov, he said:

"According to the documents, you are a flyer." He pointed at the seat next to him. "Get him out of there and take the wheel." He added: "I am about to collapse."

Zubov released the body of the dead pilot. Then he took his place, put his feet on the pedals and took the stick.

He did not notice the other pilot, unstrapping himself, tried to stand up, but, losing strength, collapsed on the dead radio man. Zubov piloted the plane and was absorbed by the task.

Feeling himself in control, he experienced a feeling of happiness. Yet, he knew that he would be unable to take the plane to the location of the Soviet troops. The plane was losing fuel which burned as a tail behind it. No more than a few seconds were left. The plane was either to explode in fire or else crash.

The senior passenger, a SS Sturmbanfuehrer, entered the cockpit and froze, looking at the collapsed bodies. Zubov turned to him and said:

"Everything is in order, Sturmbanfuehrer."

Zubov's face was impassive, his eyes were shining, with pleasure. This had a calming effect on the Sturmbanfuehrer. Ignoring the bodies, he left the cockpit, closing the door.

Slowly and carefully, Zubov was gathering altitude. He himself did not know why he was doing this. Perhaps it was simply that he liked it. When he got the aircraft out of the almost impenetrable darkness, he found himself in a brilliant space, in the great ocean of light, in the whiteness of an unearthly glitter. Below him were cool seeming clouds, as though a field of snow. This impeccable snow-white cover reminded him of his native land, so beautiful and peaceful. Feeling this sweet proximity of his native land, Zubov did what he had to do. He slowly pointed the plane down.

With his right hand he gave full throttle. Together, the propellers whistled down increasing the speed of the engine.

The Sturmbanfuehrer again entered the cockpit. He shrieked and tried to grab the seat. He fell down, hit the dome and covered it. To see the earth, Zubov pressed on the left pedal.

The plane was falling on a small city with its high pile roofs. The last thing that Zubov thought was "why on the people? The people must live." With inhuman strength, he pulled the stick to himself, as though listening to his own bones cracking. The city disappeared as a ghost. Relieved and exhausted, Zubov took his hands off the stick. He inhaled.

...but he could not exhale. The ground rose at him...

A burned hole remained on the ground, as though a meteorite had fallen. The sky above it was clear. For a short while, Sergey Zubov had lived in that sky.

All those days, Aleksandr Belov was tortured by an unbearable pain; it lived with him, thrashing in his head as a big black rat. The torture did not stop for a moment. Sometimes, he felt as though he were in a sort of pink colored fog. To seemed to him that he was swaying in this fog of pain as though his mind was on fire.

Yet the moment he could think clearly, he again thought of Zubov. His thoughts were miserable, despairing, suffering that he could not prevent the danger threatening Zubov. This pain rendered the pain suffered from the severe concussion even more difficult. The wounds caused by the grenade splinters were successfully healing.

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The day when the operation for the release of the inmates of the underground concentration camp began, Henrich and Willi Schwartzkopf, wearing parade uniforms, were making their way through the ruins of the Reichchancery. They were going to offer the Fuehrer their congratulations on the occasion of his birthday/anniversary. The reception for those closest to Hitler was to be held in the underground bunker.

It was Kaltenbrunner who had suggested to Willi Schwartzkopf to bring his nephew, hoping that the Fuehrer might like to recall how once, through the force of his hypnotic eyes, he had been able to "hypnotize" this young man.

Before leaving his house, Willi went to the mirror and carefully looked himself over. He tried several smiles choosing the one he was to use when greeting the Fuehrer. Waiting for his uncle, Henrich distractedly looked through his papers. One of them read:

"To the main SS administration. Berlin-Lichtenfelde-West.

"I report that the construction of crematorium No. 3 has been completed. Thus, all crematoria covered by the order, have been built."

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"Current productivity for the crematoria now available,
per 24 hours:

- "1. The old crematorium I. 3x2 furnaces -- 340 corpses.
- "2. The new crematorium in the camp for military prisoners of war II. 5x3 furnaces - 1,440 corpses."
- "3. The new crematorium III. 5x3 furnaces -- 1,440 corpses.
- "4. The new crematorium IV. 768 corpses.
- "5. The new crematorium V -- 768 corpses.

"Total: 4,756 corpses per 24 hours."

A bill submitted by the firm "I. A. Topf and Sons" (Erfurt) was attached to the report:

"Costs:

"Price of furnaces -- 25,148 Reichsmarks; weight -- 5,637 kilograms. Indicated price is FOB freight car, unloaded at the station.

"For "I. A. Topf and Sons": Sender, Erdman, 50001/0211."

Showing to Willi those documents of the SS economic administration, Henrich said:

"Well, we will soon have to pay on those accounts!"

Willi frowned:

"These are old papers. I am getting ready to destroy them."

"Evidence?" Henrich asked.

Willi said sullenly:

"It has nothing to do with me. I was ordered and I made the order, I supervised the construction and paid out the money." He added: "I am an honest man and no one will dare accuse me of collecting a commission from firms with whom I dealt, even though in the commercial world this is accepted."

"So then, why did you decide to destroy, this...?"

"I am still not sure whether it is worth...
be a proof of my conscientiousness."

"Who will need such proofs now?"

"You know," angrily said Willi, "whatever the case, the firms and concerns with which I had to do will not stop operating. That is what happened during the last war and, I hope, that is what will happen now. Therefore, Willi Schwartzkopf may rely on having an administrative position with one of the firms with which he had business contacts and enjoy a good reputation."

"Do you believe in your future, Uncle?"

"Naturally, so long as the western world will remain as it was before the Fuehrer and after him. When all this hullabaloo with the victory over us is ended, the western countries will have to rebuild our power and again aim it at the Soviet Union."

"However, you are still an optimist and you have iron nerves."

"Naturally," said Willi pleased. He sniffed scornfully: "I am not Lansdorf. He shot himself as a hysterical woman, when one of his subordinates told him that one of his favorites was apparently a Soviet agent."

"Who was the suspect?" asked Henrich interested.

"This is not known: Lansdorf burned all his papers. He boasted too much with his skill, unattainable by simple mortals, of reading into the souls of other people. He was writing his memoirs in which he was depicting himself as a first magnitude star in the German intelligence service. Apparently, he did not wish his memoirs to be ripped apart. So, he shot himself out of Arthur's vanity and senile pathological nervousness."

"So, there was no Soviet agent whatsoever?"

"Naturally. It was a standard report of a conscienceless and jealous co-worker."

Walking through the ruins of the Reichschancery into the underground barracks of the SS guards, the Schwartzkopf

uncle and nephew cleaned up their parade uniforms from lime and brick dust. In the narrow hall, they took off their gloves and shook off the dust. Then, they went down the stone stairs through the garage and started moving slowly in the line of the higher ranks of the Reich who had come to greet the Fuehrer.

Hitler was sitting in a chair, in a long reception room, the shape of a railroad car, with a low ceiling and concrete walls, under the portrait of Friedrich the Great.

His feet, in white britches, were spread wide apart, as though he feared falling off the chair and was holding on. His potato colored soft face was droopy, his lower lips puffed. The once blue eyes had the color of rotten meat. His hair was moist and neatly combed, as that of a corpse.

The huge, gorilla-resembling Kaltenbrunner was on his left side. Next to him was the short Bormann. His lipless face retained its former arrogant expression.

Concernedly, Hitler's senior ADC was standing on the right of the Fuehrer. After each handshake, he discreetly wiped the Fuehrer's hand with a piece of cotton dipped in disinfectant.

Even though it was silent in the bunker, it was difficult to hear in this enclosed and stifling underground, the answers Hitler gave to the greetings. With effort, he mumbled some incomprehensible words and his seemingly boneless and flabby body drooped even deeper into the chair. Only the big rough nose on the gray and moist face stood out firm, arrogant as though independent of the face. His left hand resting on the armchair twitched convulsively. No one dared look at that hand which moved energetically whereas his owner crawled from the chair weakly and tiredly.

Yet when Himmler approached and, smiling sweetly, began his enthusiastic greetings, what Heinrich Schwartzkopf expected least of all happened with this half-corpse, something that so far, had been mentioned in rumors and legends only. The Fuehrer jumped -- a raving, tense mad man. Howling, he tried with his crooked fingers, to remove the order Himmler was wearing on his uniform.

The hardly comprehensible howl made it difficult to understand that this rage was provoked by the fact that the Anglo-American troops had found, in the Bergen-Belsen

Concentration Camp, as well as in other camps, prisoners alive. The SS troops, using incendiary bullets, had been able to kill some of the inmates. However, the corpses had not been turned to ashes.

Hitler accused Himmler of doing this on purpose, in his efforts to prevent the conclusion of the talks with the British and the Americans concerning joint action against the Soviet Army.

Himmler kept silent and patiently waited for this access of mad energy to come to an end and for Hitler's forces to roll out. Then, he began efficiently to report: he had given an order to take all the inmates out of the concentration camps of Sachenhausen, Ravensbruk and Neiengamme and marched them off to Lubek. There, they were to be piled up on ships, taken to the open sea and drowned. This order was already being carried out.

"And no traces will be left?" tiredly asked Hitler.

"Absolutely none," firmly assured him Himmler.

Then he said: "My Fuehrer, you already know: the concentration camps located both within Germany and on the occupied territories included, all in all, about 18 million people. Eleven million of these were killed in the course of these years." He said with dignity: "My merits and zeal in this respect are well known to you." He complained: "Unfortunately, in many camps my order which stemmed from your command, was not carried out. The reason for this is unexplainable: there was an accident with an aircraft which carried the SS representatives, and many others..."

Reporting with an even voice, Himmler was horrified: He was afraid that the Fuehrer knew of his secret deals and that now, this minute, he would issue the order for his arrest.

Schellenberg tried to cheer up Himmler and give him faith in the future. He had called from Hamburg the astrologer Uhaf who had drawn Himmler's horoscope which marked his fate: he was to become the Fuehrer. Schellenberg talked Felix Kersten, Himmler's personal masseur, to intimidate to the Reichsbuehrer, that he was to become Hitler's successor.

Encouraged by all this, Himmler even decided to ask his old schoolmate Stumpfegger to replace the narcotic he was injecting into Himmler with the poison.

Now, however, standing in front of the powerless Fuehrer

"with his flinched pupils, Himmler was trembling with horror.

Going to Hitler to greet him on the occasion of his birthday, Himmler held in his mouth a capsule with poison. Reporting, he kept touching it. If the Fuehrer was to order his arrest, all he had was to move his tongue and the capsule would be between his teeth. He would crush it between his teeth, and that would be all. He would thus trick Kaltenbrunner and Krautmann, depriving them of the possibility to interrogate him, using all the methods which he had learned to use himself, in the course of long years of practice in the prisons...

Tiredly, the Fuehrer waved him off. Himmler breathed with relief and tiptoed away. His face, neck and armpits were wet with urine smelling sweat.

This marked the end of the reception. The Fuehrer was tired, the ADC declared. However, he promised that the names of all those who had come to greet him will be reported.

The high placed visitors -- mainly his entourage -- were crowded in the underground garage.

Among them, Henrich noticed the arrogant face of General Fegelein, the husband of Eva Braun's sister. He learned from Willie that Fegelein was a Himmler supporter and was engaged with him in some sort of secret talks. Now, however, the General loudly and easily blamed Himmler for his lack of talent, to destroy the concentration camp inmates. Himmler obediently listened to the insults, answering not a word.

Fegelein stopped only when Magda Goebbels appeared, in the company of her children. Expressions which he used for Himmler were inadmissible in the presence of a lady.

Both -- Fegelein and Himmler -- greeted Mrs. Goebbels with the respectful bow. Then, as though he had never insulted Himmler, Fegelein, as though nothing had happened, turned to the Reichsfuehrer:

"I would think that he," he motioned toward the door, "will not leave the bunker to the end."

"Do you think so?" doubtfully asked Himmler, looking at the gray concrete walls, he noted: "All this is not very safe."

"What is now safe and who is now safe?" asked Fegelein.

"Whom do you have in mind?"

Smiling, Fegelein approvingly patted Himmler on the shoulder.

"Yet you are a brave man: you decided to congratulate the Fuehrer. Goering did not dare. He has gone south, expecting to be promoted the successor."

"Well, we shall have to see about this."

"Precisely," agreed Fegelein and once again promisingly smiled at Himmler.

Fegelein could not know that, before he would be able to report to the Fuehrer on Himmler, Bohrmann and Kaltenbrunner, he would be reported himself and, in a few days, he was to be shot on this same spot, among the ruins of the yard of the Reichschancery. And that Eva Braun would tell her widowed sister as a consolation and not without envy:

"Well, now, you could claim to be Hitler's victim in the eyes of the western powers. They may even give you a pension which would be quite adequate for you to be able to openly support your Skortzeni."

"He was your lover first," the widow reminded her.

"Yet in my heart and soul I was always with Adolph," proudly said Eva. "Even when Otto was my lover."

Because of his poor health and extreme neurosis, Hitler could never permit himself the pleasure of chilling anyone himself. However, he loved those who could do this. He loved and envied them. He was attached to Otto Skortzeni. His physical strength, his "tremendousness" amazed the Fuehrer. This dullard with an embryonic brain was unable to study even the most elementary first grade subjects. Yet they tried to give him an engineer's diploma! Otherwise, he would have knocked the professor out with brass knuckles.

Skortzeni had the body of a prize fighter, thick and stocky. Yet at student sports competitions he could never be first. A beast by nature, he lacked some of the characteristics of the animals. He lacked blind courage. Yet in order to kill unpunished, without resistance, all one needs is nimbleness. He killed professionally, as a butcher, knowing that he was not frightened by anything. His profession of killer made him attractive to the Fuehrer and the Fuehrer condescendingly

forgave the Braun sisters their attraction for this animal.

Magda Goebbels moved across the crowd in the garage scornfully pulling back her shoulders, already high according to fashion. She knew that everyone here had frequently asked, with a sad expression, Murel, Hitler's personal physician, how the adored Fuehrer was, in the hope that his case was hopeless.

However, Murel had pumped Hitler so much with narcotics that out of a half a corpse he again turned into a mad ruler, thirsty for revenge against one and all.

Magda Goebbels knew: everyone here was hoping for Hitler's death. However, everyone wanted to hear of it before the others, to begin immediately to crawl in front of the one who, more clever than the others, would take the Fuehrer's place. To some, Hitler's death would be the signal they needed to fly west wherever was safe. They were afraid to run before the signs, knowing that Himmler, Kaltenbrunner and Bohmann would catch up with them and would kill them with pleasure. Many would be killed not as deceivers but as possible pretenders for the secret distribution of the gigantic treasures which had been accumulated in neutral banks. That was the fund to be used if the Nazis had the possibility to assume power once again.

Magda Goebbels had long hated these people -- since the time when Hitler was not as yet dictator of the Reich but was already the Fuehrer of the Nazis.

Hitler felt toward Magda a strange feeling of attachment and preferred her to all other women. She cooked his favorite dishes: potatoes with minced hard-boiled eggs and chocolate with cream. He had a sweet tooth. He loved home comforts and enjoyed them.

Goebbels begged Magda, for their own welfare, to become closer to the Fuehrer. Magda obediently tried to carry out her husband's wishes. However, gently repulsing all her attempts, the Fuehrer explained that he had no right to waste his energy devoted to political activities. Hearing this great admission, Magda was taken with Hitler even more: he was so different from the people around him.

Jealous of Goebbels' advantages, the people near the Fuehrer began adamantly looking for another confidante for the Fuehrer -- someone who could become their agent.

But they failed. The aristocrat Puzzi Gansdorffengl refused Hitler already when he was not as yet Fuehrer but just the leader of the fascists and did not know how to behave at the table or in society. Then, Hitler refused Mrs. Wagner, recommended to him, and related to the composer. He also refused the widow of the manufacturer of Bechstei pianos.

Finally, they found a Bavarian -- Eva Braun, assistant to Hoffman, the photographer of the former corporal. It was she who took the place of Magda Goebbels.

... Magda Goebbels cast an evil glance at the stoeky Kaltenbrunner: she knew that Kaltenbrunner and his friend Skortzeni had prepared everything for a flight to the Austrian Alps where, a tremendous amount of various valuables had been accumulated in secret caches. Both of them were lying to the Fuehrer that, in inaccessible fortresses in the mountains, they will put selected SS troops, to continue the struggle.

Magda did not believe that those favorites of the Fuehrer would fight when he would be no longer there. She knew: they simply wanted to steal the treasures concealed in the mountains.

However, could she know what would happen to her in the future? That Skortzeni, accompanying the powerless Kaltenbrunner along a mountain road, would betray him to the Americans in the hope of acquiring their gratitude and eliminating a partner in dividing the well concealed wealth? Skortzeni was quite successful in his intents since he had the assurance to the effect that the Anglo-Americans would behave properly with him. When, following the capitulation of Italy, Skortzeni kidnapped Mussolini, he was able to steal from him not only some of his diaries, but the main thing, the secret correspondence with the Prime Minister of England, Winston Churchill.

These letters contained materials which could have compromised Churchill so strongly that his political reputation, in his declining years, could have become soiled forever.

Skortzeni quoted these letters to the Anglo-Americans as an ultimatum and demanded, in exchange, respect, comfort and complete freedom.

.... Goebbels was surrounded by Generals, leaning against the center of a bullet proof automobile, loaded with luggage. Throwing back his head, and stamping with his pointed heels,

he was saying:

"We firmly believe that in today's heroic struggle of our people, if we look far ahead, there will appear the greatest empire ever known by history. Yet this depends only on us alone..."

Magda knew that it was in this automobile that they were to leave Berlin. Not now, but later, after Hitler had signed his last will. Her husband hoped that his devotion would be properly considered by the Fuehrer. As yet, he was only trying to use the time that was left: creating intrigues between Hitler and Hitler, Kaltenbrunner and Bohrmann, as possible pretenders for the role of Fuehrer. Goering was not considered. He had been able, together with Kaltenbrunner and Bohrmann, to make Hitler dislike Goering.

As always when asked questions he did not wish to answer, Keitel was winding up the gramophone. With a dull expression on his face, he was listening to music, waiting for the man who was asking him urgent questions to lose patience.

Keitel knew: the Fuehrer would not leave the bunker under the Reichschancery not because he was eager to command from here the troops which were hopelessly fighting the Soviet divisions attacking Berlin. If Hitler were to leave the bunker, in order to save themselves, those who were with him would betray him to the enemy to save themselves. They would declare under oath and in writing that this semi-paralyzed man, in a state of prostration, and having lost his speech, eyesight and hearing was Hitler, the Fuehrer, the former dictator of the former Third Reich.

Meanwhile, those present at the Reichschancery, were celebrating Hitler's birthday.

Now, in the garage, they talked, smoked, drank, putting the bottles with wine on the machines. Everything was proper.

Someone jokingly said that Krupp had said about Goering: "This hulk should be taken to the Ruhr, to cover some of my plants which are being bombed. That is the only thing he is good for now."

Everyone knew of the unsuccessful attempts on the part of Goering to conclude separate peace on his own behalf with the allies. However, another thing was also known: only Himmler, who had in his hands the entire police and SS forces of the Reich, could suppress the democratic movement in Germany.

Himmler was not the only person who could take Hitler's place. Unfortunately, he had been unable to destroy the most dangerous proofs: the inmates of many concentration camps had been liberated by the Soviet army and by the armies of the allies.

The Fuehrer's guests were speculating on what had prevented Himmler and Kaltenbrunner purely to erase all concentration camps from the face of the earth. They spoke of this with irritation and plunged into guesses.

They also failed to understand why no information on underground terrorist "werewolf" units located on German territory occupied by Soviet troops was coming, even though they had been abundantly supplied with everything necessary for active operations.

Listening to all this talk, Heinrich Schwartzkopf proudly thought of Johann Neiss. He could also be proud of himself. Wearing the black uniform of the SS, he behaved quite arrogantly. It was known that the Fuehrer liked him. He was considered to be a clever young man and even generals, in any case, presently smiled, toasting with him.

Those who had come to congratulate the Fuehrer were not in a hurry to leave, not at all because they liked each other's company. The next bombing raid was on end, unwilling to display cowardice, they continued to talk lively. With proper manners, they blabbed of anything, patiently awaiting the moment in which they would be able to abandon this unreliable shelter.

The faces of those who belonged to the entourage, guard and service personnel around Hitler were light gray, as though they were sick. Their skin had become colorless from their constant stay in the shelter. In order not to look like corpses which had spent a long time in the morgue, the telephone operators were so made up as though they were to go on the stage.

This was a vault inhabited by corpses, each one of whom tried to pretend he was alive.

Willi Schwartzkopf was not left alone for a minute: he was constantly taken aside; one or another person whispered in his ear. The main unit of the Reich was now the SS administrative-economic administration: it was in charge of the

financial wellbeing of all the leaders of the Reich for the time when the Reich would no longer exist.

Right and left, Willi Schwartzkopf gave generous and consoling promises. He also was promised mounds of gold for his services. In answer, he mistrustfully nodded, knowing very well that he would be cheated as much as he intended to cheat many of his subordinates. He himself was in charge of financial operations, he processed the transfer of foreign currency and gold to foreign banks and current accounts under false names. The documents for such false names were very well made by the technical department of foreign intelligence and some of them Willi had managed to acquire. He did not intend to run to the West with burdensome and heavy luggage; in order to be able to take the documents with him, all he needed was a valise with a false bottom. He knew he would be able to cash them at the banks. First, he had to decide what enterprise was most reliable and profitable, in which to invest. The awareness that he was already a millionaire helped Willi retain his modest appearance and promise anything to anyone.

Thus, he patiently heard Keitel who, before discussing with him some of his financial affairs, said confidentially:

"The Fuehrer has not yet lost hope, no. Prince Hohenloes could still reach an agreement on his behalf with the Anglo-Americans; he relies particularly on the USA. You should have seen the Fuehrer, when Roosevelt's death was reported! He was happy with all his heart, like a child. You know that he is a Puritan. He does not drink a drop of alcohol. Suddenly, he asked for champagne. Why did this happen so late? If it had only been a year previously! Truman has become president too late." He said with irritation: "We have long known of his sympathies for us and we could have helped him in the past - sent capable agents to eliminate Roosevelt. Heidrich could do such thing impeccably. But not Himmler. What is Himmler? A blockhead! The Fuehrer will not forgive him his negligence with the concentration camps. Bohrmann considers Himmler's talks with the British and American agents as treason and will raise his question of his expulsion from the Nazi ranks. The main thing, however, remains the concentration camps. He even dared consider as his personal merit the killing of 11 million people! Yet, he was unable to cope with the rest. Under what circumstances? Most favorable circumstances! Yes, hanging is not enough for this!"

Willi respectfully reported to Keitel the measures adopted by the SS administrative-economic administration to open current accounts in the banks of neutral countries for

"certain individuals. Their names were entered in documents made by the technical branch of the SD and were given to those for whom these accounts were opened.

"Excellent," Keitel said. "I will think about what is best for me."

Crowding in the garage, in their dark uniforms, all those leaders of the Reich spoke to one another in whispers, retaining on their faces their sad and solemn expression, as though they were attending a funeral. All of them shared the feelings of people one of whose contemporaries had died: each one thinks, with fear and alarm, whether he does not have the same symptoms of the disease which had killed the man.

And, like in funerals where people like to talk of brilliant physicians who could have saved the deceased, with the same special hope those present asked one another whether Truman or Churchill intended to "save the German Empire" for a new war against Russia.

Henrich, moving from one group to another, carefully listened to such talks. Listening to what the condemned were talking, he thought of Johann Weiss -- his friend who, risking his life, had gotten him out of this abyss and made him a fighter for a new Germany.

Henrich did not intend to, and could not, go to that house where he lived and where Willi Schwartzkopf had set up his private office.

On the eve, he had taken from Willi's safe many documents which were proof of the Nazi crimes.

Henrich had carried out Johann Weiss's instructions: he had irrefutable proof which could be presented, in the name of the new Germany, at the trial over the Hitlerite military criminals, the trial of fascism. Part of these documents were subsequently given to the international court in Nuremberg.

He was hiding all these papers in a secret place pointed out to him by Professor Stuthoff. The professor had given Henrich a secret place with one of the German underground organizations, in the workers' area Wedding. Here Henrich, wearing simple clothes, had hid for a while in the house of the communist Otto Schultz.

"Henrich told Schultz that his uncle, Willi Schwartzenf, had organized the murder of his own brother and that Henrich wanted to shoot the murderer of his father but that a Russian comrade had forbidden him to do so.

Schultz listened to Henrich with profound sympathy.

"This Russian was, undoubtedly, your best friend," he said. "He wanted you to become a fighter against fascism not only because a fascist had killed your father."

"Yes," Henrich said. "That is what he was, my Johann."

"Was he German?"

"No," Henrich said. "He was pure Russian. He was a communist, however, like you." He added proudly: "He was also for the Germans -- the people like you and your comrades." After a silence, he concluded quietly: "But, apparently, Johann has died..."

"Don't you know the circumstances?"

"He was rescuing the inmates of concentration camps. Those included people of all nationalities -- from all the countries which the fascists had enslaved, dozens of thousands of people. He liked to say that man may be happy only when he serves the others..."

"Don't you know his real name?"

"No," Henrich said. "But he saved me, he saved me from something more terrible than death..."

Awareness slowly came back to Johann Weiss. However, he seemed to regain consciousness suddenly, as though subject to a shock, when he saw the confused and hesitant figure of Baryshev. Gradually, the outline became thicker, as though a figure on a screen which at first was not in focus but then, all of a sudden, became clear. Baryshev had a robe around his broad shoulders, blindingly white. Baryshev dropped on a chair near the bed and, as though they had seen each other no later than the day before, said in his usual voice, as always, businesslike and thoughtful:

"What is the matter, Belov, why are you so calm?" He leaned, brought his smoothly shaven face closer to Johann and stood up. "Well, hello!" He said: "It is hot outside and you here, it is cool, pleasant." He turned around, looked. "Almost a private room." He started piling on the night table fruit and other edibles.

Weiss looked at Baryshev carefully and mistrustingily, expecting this ghost to disappear again just like they removed objects which he had tried to see, to determine whether he could see again. Yet everything in the room was quite stable with Baryshev's appearance, existing not as outlines but as material objects.

Turning to the nurse, who stood by the door with a somewhat confused expression, Baryshev asked softly:

"Nurse, we would love strong tea, in the Muscovite fashion. Is that possible? Apparently, you gave him only milk tea as to a fascist."

"Nothing of the sort," objected the nurse. "We treated him as we treat our own officers."

"All right," pleasantly agreed Baryshev. "So, give us that same tea."

When Colonel Baryshev reached the garrison hospital located in a small German town where, according to his information, Belov was supposed to be undergoing treatment, the physician on duty, checking the records, told him that there is not, and there has not been, any Belov here. There were only a few wounded and sick Soviet officers but that did not include Belov.

"Yet could there also be any other wounded here undergoing treatment?" insisted the Colonel.

"Where is a German, an SD officer?" The physician raised his eyebrows and said firmly: "As a physician, however, I object to his interrogation now. This could entirely break him down. His traumatic damages turned out to be quite serious." He suggested: "If you wish, you may look at his hospital record." He explained: "A real fascist." Yet, he deemed it necessary to add: "However, we do not treat him as a war criminal: to us he is only a wounded undergoing treatment."

"Let ... have a look, I am curious."

The physician handed Baryshev the hospital record.

"Hauptsturmführer Johann Weiss," Baryshev read and he had to exert all his will to remain calm.

"What kind of a bird is he?" indifferently asked Baryshev, thirstily looking at a pitcher filled with water.

The physician said:

"He seems to be a man exclusively devoted to fascism. Even in a state of profound mental shock, accompanied by general depression and temporary weakening of the sight, hearing and the use of his extremities, he retains the idea of himself being a Nazi 'hero'. True," continued the physician after a short silence, "his psychosis is somewhat peculiar: it seems to him that he is in a German hospital, among his own people. In order to avoid additional disturbance, we do everything possible to make him believe so. He is in a very poor state and, if he were to learn that he is captured, this could kill him."

"So." After a short while, Baryshev said approvingly: "Naturally, I am not a doctor, but I would presume, from the psychiatric point of view, that your method is scientifically correct."

"Undoubtedly," the doctor said.

With unsteady fingers, Baryshev took a cigarette, put the wrong end in his mouth, tried to strike a match to it, and, with a feeling of disgust, threw it in the ash tray. He asked uncertainly:

"Well, what do you think -- will he get well?"

The physician shrugged his shoulders.

"You see," he said heavily, "the multiple wounds healed well. However, the functions of the brain are still secret to us. It happens that some external irritant would act in such a way that the entire mental machinery would suddenly resume normal work. However, the opposite could happen too. We relied on long periods of sleep. That provides an overall rest for the nervous system and, usually, gives the best results."

"So, is he sleeping?"

"Imagine, even the strongest sleeping pills do not seem to work. Furthermore, the patient pretends to be asleep but his eyelids react to the light which does not happen in someone who is truly asleep."

"Listen," plaintively asked Baryshev. "Let me become this irritant. Understand, my dear man, this is a comrade of ours, and in simple words, he is a hero, of a type not always written in the papers."

The doctor looked at him amazed. Baryshev begged:

"Allow me, will you?" He admitted: "I myself am shaken up." He asked: "Give me something," he snapped his fingers, "something like tranquilliser drops ... You know, my nerves need it too."

Finally, Baryshev calmed down and, from the very first minute that he entered Belov's room, he behaved as though they had been all the time together and he had just left for a little while, and was now back. Looking at the small room, as though measuring it, Baryshev asked Belov:

"You don't object if they put a bed for me here, do you?" He explained: "Naturally, I am not wounded but, give the doctors a man and they will find something wrong."

When, following Baryshev's request, a second bed was brought into the room, he put on hospital clothing and said:

"I love to be taken care of but that has not happened frequently. True, I have been in the hands of surgeons -- brought to them. But thus, to come by myself, no. Yet, one should respect one's body: it is thanks to it that we exist. The body is like a container. If it holds you, everything is in order." Lying down on the bed, he suggested: "Why don't we take a nap?" He asked worriedly: "Do you snore?"

Belov looked at Baryshev closely and worriedly.

Baryshev pressed a bell button. When the nurse came, followed by the physician, he said:

"Check me up, will you." He said vaguely: "I feel weak." He patted his strong muscular shoulder. He asked: "Rheumatism perhaps? Or even fever?"

While the physician and the nurse dealt with the colonel, he had a long talk with them: he wanted to know whether the pond behind the hospital had fish and what bait to use, how were supplied here, were there frequent movies. When the doctor and the nurse left, Belov asked with effort:

"Are they Russian?"

"The nurse, no, she is a typical Ukrainian. The doctor is from Siberia." Baryshev added: "He is a career man, she is a volunteer."

"Abwehr intelligence," Belov said.

"Why?" exclaimed Baryshev. "How could they come here, in a Soviet hospital?" He said pleasantly: "Sasha, calm down. Evaluate circumstances objectively. Don't hurry with your analysis of all facts." He turned in his bed. "I don't feel sleepy. Don't you get any sleeping medication?"

Belov whispered:

"I get it. However, I keep the pill in my hand and then pretend to be swallowing it, so that they don't know that I have not taken anything." "They want to lull me to sleep, I understand."

"Quite smart of you," praised Baryshev. "Never mind, do one a favor, give up sleeplessness. And have company. I will be sleeping and you not -- embarrassing."

"No," Belov said.

"Don't you trust me? Keep me company, as they say, let's have one each..." Baryshev handed Belov a pill and a glass of water and saw to it that he swallowed it and patted his shoulder. "That is a good boy."

He lay down again and soon saw that Belov's face assumed a calm tired expression. "He's asleep," he thought. "It turns out that, on top of everything else, he was torturing himself with this too." He lay down on his back but he could not sleep: he was quite affected by this meeting. He was very happy to see Aleksandr Belov -- Sasha Belov -- as Baryshev had become used to calling him.

He felt somewhat guilty... The fact was that the agent in Berlin had been asked immediately to find Belov. Yet even before receiving the instruction, he had found in the Gestapo files materials of the death of Johann Weiss in an automobile accident, confirmed by photographed documents and, above all, a memorial stone in a grave, which was the best proof of all.

However, the man had a natural suspicion; being pedantic by nature, and suspecting some trick on the part of the SD, he centralized with his search among the papers of the secret services. This, however, took time.

When the Center received a query from the "professor" as to Belov's state of health, accompanied by a request, unusual for this type official documents, to convey greetings from some Nadezhda, the immediately worried Baryshev immediately flew out to Berlin and, two days later, reached the place where, not so long ago, the battle between the parachutists and the group under Belov's command had fought.

Baryshev had to remain in Berlin for a while on very important business. This included a meeting with an old acquaintance, the former doorman of the "Adlon" the dyed-in-the-wool Gestapo man Frantz.

Baryshev visited Frantz in his prison cell where the latter, generously supplied with paper and writing facilities, worked hard and conscientiously on his testimony.

Glancing at them, Baryshev happily noted the name Johann Weiss as among the most talented, in Frantz's opinion, members of the sixth branch of the SD, enjoying the particular favor of Walter Schellenberg.

With his phenomenal memory, Frantz recognized Baryshev. Baryshev, who had equally good memory, advised him to include in his testimony facts that Frantz would have wished to forget about his own work in the Gestapo, of which Baryshev was quite well informed.

Now, Baryshev felt happier than ever before, having found Belov and discovered how his Sasha Belov had impeccably assumed the character of Johann Weiss which was not easy to get rid of.

Belov slept for almost twenty-four hours. Waking up, he cautiously opened his eyes, afraid that once again he would see the foggy outlines around him. However, it turned out that

He had nothing to be afraid of: his eyesight was almost totally restored. He saw Baryshev in a hospital gown, dozing on a chair in front of his bed. He remained motionless, for fear of waking him up. However, Baryshev was a light sleeper and woke up at the first rustle. He smiled at Belov, went to the window and pulled the curtains. He said approvingly of the weather:

"Good weather for mushrooms!" He explained, with an expert's tone of voice: "They grow in such groves, particularly around the edges."

In addition to looking for Belov, Baryshev had other important official duties. However, that same night he tiptoed barefoot into the hall and called Moscow on the phone, from the office of the chief physician, explaining where he was. He stated that he considered his stay at the hospital as an exceptionally important matter. By his request, a specialist professor had to fly to the garrison hospital that same day. Baryshev had a particularly long talk with Belov's parents.

"The main thing," he shouted in the receiver, "is that the temperature is normal! That is everything. Once the temperature is normal, so is the man."

When the next morning Belov quickly left his bed and went to the wash bowl to wash, Baryshev asked, somewhat confusedly:

"What is this? Were you simulating?"

Belov said:

"At night I got up and trained myself to walk blind, in order not to forget how to walk in general. I had planned it all: if I could have escaped, I would have passed myself off as a blind Wehrmacht soldier."

"Well, that is correct," Baryshev agreed. He sighed: "I can well imagine you blind along the road... You know how fast our drivers are? They are zooming along the highways at over 100 an hour. They are showing off to the German girls." He added disapprovingly: "They should be reprimanded, that is a fact!"

After breakfast, Belov firmly said:

"I have to go to Berlin!"

"No, brother, it is still dangerous."

"Have you seen my document? Have you seen the signatures?"

"I have. Almost the entire menagerie has signed it."

"So then," Belov said.

"Then what?" Baryshov asked. "Then nothing! Any traffic girl would stop you and that would be all."

"All I need is to cross the lines," Belov said.

"No," said Baryshov. "No. Actually, there is nothing of the sort: there is no more lines, there is no more front and your document is a museum exhibit, nothing else." He said, annoyed: "That may be an irritant to you, as the doctor said, but forget about it. There is no more war. Our people are getting sunburned along the Elbe. That is that. And, for your information, my pass to Berlin must be officially signed by the commandant of Berlin. In that city, I need a gun as much as I would need to wear boots and Sochi, on the beach. Do you understand?"

"So, everything is over?"

"Precisely," Baryshov said. "Everything."

Belov remained silent for a long time. He frowned and smiled at his own thoughts. Suddenly, he asked:

"Do you have a car?"

"Let us say I do."

"Could you send it for Henrich Schwartzkopf, if he is still alive? Bring him here."

"First of all, he is," Baryshov said. "Secondly, what do you mean 'to bring him here'?" Comrade Schwartzkopf is now an official, he is a director of a big enterprise." Where

"Where?"

"What do you mean where? In our zone. It is a zone as yet and then, the Germans will find a name for it. Our problem is simple: whatever their people's regime decided, that is what it will be."

"I would like to see him."

"You think I don't let us send him a cable, that is possible. As regards transportation, he has it. It goes with his position."

"What about Gvozd'?"

"What Gvozd'? He is now a big wig. He is chairman of a Kolkhoz. He has an artificial limb but everything is fine."

"What about Elsa?"

"What Elsa? Aga, Orlova. She is cadre personnel. However, she was suspiciously interested in civil law, whether Zubov's marriage with the German is legal or illegal. Agents believe that she was in love with Zubov."

"Where is Zubov?"

Karyshev frowned. He said, finding his words with difficulty:

"You understand, the plane in which he was together with the SS representatives did not reach its destination. It appears then, whatever happened, that Zubov is a hero with all consequences."

"Is he... alive?"

"I wish he were. Yes, I very much wish he were!" Immediately, he changed the conversation: "Do you remember Lyusya Yegorova-- the one with the burned-up face, but what a beauty when you saw the other side of her face. She is a passionate mother now! I went to see her and she kept me in the hall: warm up, she says, otherwise, the baby will catch cold. I looked into the cradle and there he was, wrapped up, sucking a bib. I then took my revenge for being kept in the hall. I took away the bib, and said: "Modern medicine is against it-- it's not hygienic." A big shot -- ordering around in the rayispolikom." He asked: "How about a break?" He said sternly: "Let us do this: first, a ten minute information, and later, every day will add that much. Let there be order. Regime. We are in a hospital, nowhere else. I am just a patient. They may hear us talk and punish us: a special vitamin shot. Where? On the most defenseless territory." He said, jokingly: "I wonder if the generals and the marshals also get it there or do they find a nobler place for them?"

Thus, having voluntarily locked himself up in a hospital room, patiently and admiringly Baryshev nursed Sasha Belov, having explained to his superiors who were calling him back to Moscow the importance of his stay here with the recovering Belov.

When Heinrich Schwartzepp came to the hospital and, running to Belov, firmly hugged him and began, in a whisper, glancing at Baryshev, speaking of those days when he had remained alone and continued to work, Baryshev considered it unseemly to attend the conversation between the Soviet agent and his co-worker, and went out in the hall.

He sat on a bench, mused and talked with recovering officers about life now in the country and life as it would be. Then, afterwards, after knocking at the door, he entered the room, Heinrich said confused:

"Excuse me, I did not know that you are Colonel Baryshev."

"My fault," Baryshev answered. "I did not introduce myself."

First of all, Heinrich wanted to tell Baryshev the essence of what he had been able to find out during the last days of the existence of fascist Germany. Baryshev listened to him politely and thanked him. Then, he said thoughtfully:

"Actually, all of this is, as they say, in the past. Now, comrade Heinrich, you must think of what Germany is to become. We put an end to fascism and you will build the new Germany..." He placed his hand over his gray hair and added: "I will tell you, as to a man who worked with Johann Weiss: the secret service of the Hitlerites, with all the archives and personnel files, those which have gone west away from our retribution, is the heritage of those who are screaming now of taking over from Hitler. Therefore, you must see to it that such sweet dreams do not become bitter reality."

"As regards business, let me disagree with your decision-- I was informed of it -- of refusing work to engineer Frederick Dittmar only because he is an invalid."

"No," objected Heinrich. "That was not the reason. I received letters describing this Dittmar as an out and out Nazi..."

"I was told that too," interrupted Baryshev. "Let me caution you to be vigilant. The secret Nazis are trying now to compromise those German specialists who, without concealing their former errors, cooperate with you."

"Friedrich Ditmar! But I know him!" Belov exclaimed.

"The point is not that you yourself know him," Baryshev said. "The point is that at different times the enemy uses different tricks in the fight. But the aim is always the same: to kill a man, if not physically, morally. So," Baryshev smiled, "my request to you, Comrade Henrich, is, remain an agent but now, for human souls."

Henrich turned to Belov.

"Johann, I have decided to join the Communist Party. What do you think, will I be accepted?"

"Excuse me to interfere again." Baryshev was quite serious. "Take one thing under consideration: when this becomes known, many letters will be received by the Party denouncing you as a former SS. Don't be insulted; such letters will be written by honest people only."

"Yes," Henrich said. "I understand." Parting, he asked: "You will visit me, Johann, won't you?"

"And you will visit me, won't you?"

"In Moscow, absolutely." He asked: "Give me your address."

Belov gave him the address. Henrich wrote it down and was about to shut his notebook.

"Wait, what about the name?"

"Yes, I forgot that you have another name." Henrich thoughtfully repeated several times: "Aleksandr Belov, Aleksandr Belov..." He complained: "You know, I will find it difficult to get used to it. It seems strange to me that your name is not Johann."

"Well, address your letters to Belov, but for you, I will remain Johann Weiss as before."

When Neurich left, Barylev said:

"That is the main thing as far as we are concerned: save the man. What is a great good and a great joy." Lying on his back, he said: "Shall we nap?"

Belov smiled.

"Somehow, I don't feel like it."

"That's bad," said Baryshev. He gave a strict order: "Well, mobilise your willpower!" He ordered: "Let us sleep! The initiative is mine and the fulfillment is for both of us." He turned off the light.

However, it was still light outside. No matter how hard Baryshev tried, he could not sleep. Opening his eyes, he saw that Belov was asleep. His face was calm and tranquil, his breathing was even. "A wilful boy," obviously thought Baryshev. He also thought, obviously: "Maybe this is youth? Youth deals more easily with difficulties than a man burdened by years." Then, he proudly thought of his work: "A big job and endlessly delicate, complex, demanding humanity ... much as inhumanity for anything inhuman on earth."

Belov was not asleep. Out of politeness, he pretended to be asleep to calm Baryshev down.

Zubov's death had disturbed him. Yet in the course of all these years, he had learned to suppress his feelings so well that even now, in Baryshev's presence, as though automatically, he did not betray his feelings at the news. Lying down with his eyes shut, he thought of Zubov seeing him with blinding clarity the way he was at that quiet early morning when they swam in the Wansee. Zubov suddenly had asked him:

"Would you really like to live to be a hundred?" He immediately declared firmly: "I would not object!"

Yet Zubov was no mere. No. However, as though defying death, he continued his life in Belov's memory, becoming his eternal and invisible companion in life.

It was the former bomber plane, ending its service as a transport aircraft. It was piloted by two junior lieutenants--young flyers, graduated just before the very end of the war.

They looked as though wearing improper uniforms, lacking orders or medals on their chests, or purple heart ribbons. The fact that the pilots were very young and that their entire equipment was new, as though issued that same day, and also the fact that their faces were exceptionally concentrated -- all this reminded the army passengers who sat on the aluminum folding benches -- most of them senior officers -- of themselves -- as they were when they went to war.

The plexiglass dome on the roof of the compartment, under which once hung on straps, now tied on the gun ring, the machine gun, was pierced by several holes, covered with percale; the release mechanism over the bomb bay had been dismantled, and cleeks and caps were hanging on the remaining screws.

It was bright and sunny. Soft clouds seemed frozen in a windless, quiet lake-cool sky.

The plane was flying over German territory. The passengers, clumsily twisting their necks, twisted on the metal folding benches and looked down through the moist square shaped portholes.

Sun rays falling almost perpendicularly on the ground, licked it as skilfully as the old masters in their Apulian landscapes, full of abundant blooms and fertility.

From that altitude, the land looked really accurately and thoroughly cultivated. The houses, with their high brick roofs, seemed just as bright, clean and comfortable as those in the pictures of the Gleser and Petzold textbook which had been used, long before the war, for the study of German in the schools by many of these, already elderly people in the airplane. Now, they carefully and with concentration looked at that land where nature and human work had already begun to erase that which was once known as the battlefield, line, front position, where battles were fought with such intensive fire that it would seem that the ground would freeze forever in a black, glassy mass, resembling basalt, and that not even a blade of grass would grow there.

In that war, mankind had lost millions of lives. And they were the people who, perhaps, with their genius and work, would have given to mankind great discoveries, find new ways to conquer nature and improve man. Yet they had been killed.

German fascism had been nurtured not by the German imperialists alone: counting on sharing the spoils, they were secretly helped by their western partners. During the Second World War, these partners frequently hesitated, afraid of missing the moment when they should join the winner. It was only the defeat of the fascist armies that put an end to the hesitation. However, this victory caused alarm, and not happiness. The Soviet Army helped the peoples of the European countries occupied by the fascists, and fighting in the resistance units, to defect and reject the occupants from their countries. Now, these peoples could continue their struggle for social freedom.

That is what happened in the countries of Eastern Europe--they became socialist. That is the road that was being followed by Germans living on the eastern territory of Germany, liberated by the Soviet Army. On this territory, Soviet military units did everything possible to help the country rise from its ruins and its people, following the way it had chosen, to be able to build the new Germany.

That is why the majority of passengers so concentratedly and carefully looked through the portholes: the airplane was flying over Germany, on whose fields was growing the first post-war grain.

Aleksandr Belov also looked through the porthole hot from the sun. Similar to the young pilot, his field shirt had neither orders nor medals. His uniform was as new as theirs. The shaved head with traces of removed stitches, the deeply sad eyes, the sad wrinkles around the lips, and the gray temples -- all this attracted the curiosity of the passengers.

By virtue of his age, he should have been a combat man. Yet he had no single decoration. Therefore, he had been a member of a penal battalion. Perhaps, he was a former prisoner of war, sent to concentration camp from the very beginning of the war?

When the colonel sitting by him asked since when Belov had been at the front and what battles he had taken part in, Belov somewhat confusedly blinked and explained:

"Actually, I was in the rear..."

The colonel looked at Belov's shrunken chest and, consequently buttoning up his shirt pocket, said instructively:

"When we were in a tight spot, you know, all rear personnel was sent ahead. They fought." He said, firmly: "I have submitted many of them for government awards."

"Yes, naturally," Belov agreed.

"So, one stayed in fascist camps?" Shrewdly decided the colonel.

"It happened..."

"And one withstood?"

"It seems so," Belov said.

The colonel turned his back at him and did not resume the conversation.

The plane went into the clouds. Darkness fell in the cabin.

Belov looked at the colonel's back, and immediately recalled Zubov. He remembered how he, cracking on his muscular and broad back a German tunic, asked:

"Look what's the matter. Couldn't take it, huh?" He boasted: "He wounded me, but I did not kill him, I abstained. You understand, I felt sorry for him: he was quite young."

That was after Zubov's group had attacked a fuel base in the railroad area. Frowning from pain, but his eyes laughing, Zubov said, amusingly:

"It would be interesting to estimate the number of flights of which we have deprived the Germans. Simply so, for fun pleasure."

Then, Belov saw Zubov's face when he was throwing his parachute out of the aircraft. Understanding Belov's amazed look, he cheerfully winked at him and even tried to shrug his shoulders: nothing to do.

Yet Zubov's face as though blended, disappeared and Belov saw another face -- bоскed back, with a piece of skin hanging on the forehead. That was Bruno's face. When Bruno's eyes met his, full of despair, Bruno slightly moved his head as though silently explaining all this: this had to be.

"Would you like to smoke?" leaned toward Belov a major in the tank corps, with a new gold star on his uniform. He added: "You must have yearned solidly for Soviet tobacco." He offered the whole pack. "Take it."

"Thank you," I have said."

"So, you were supplied for the road." The major said: "I myself was a prisoner, but escaped. It turned out that I was not heavily wounded; the moment I saw to, I ran away. I was not tried." He said firmly: "Yet if man reduces his guilt in blood... there may not be any medal on his chest but, this means that he has it in his heart. One thing is important now: whether a man is good for further action -- no longer the service -- for life, or not. Sorrow will heal, life will take care of it." He waved to the porthole. "I left two of my brothers there. I will be the only one to come home. What will I tell my mother? 'Hello!' 'Where are the others?' 'They are no more.' And I am alive. After that, do you think she will be happy with my star? No."

"You are wrong," Belov objected. "If our people had not carried out a unique exploit, millions more of brothers, fathers and sons would have died."

"True," the major agreed. "In fact, what is a heroic deed? It is one person doing the job of several. So that the others may live. That is how you save them. Isn't that true?" He was quite nervous. "That is what I thought in battle: 'If I do not strike their tank, their tank will strike ours. So, I hit. When you are scared that, because of you, your own people may die, you are not scared for yourself.'"

The plane cut through the clouds and the sun reappeared. The second pilot came out of the cockpit and solemnly announced:

"Comrades, you are crossing the state borders of the Soviet Union." He waited and said quietly: "Some combat personnel are insulted when we do not announce the motherland."

Belov kept looking at the porthole.

The warm land of the fatherland, marked with the scars of defense lines, and the round bomb craters with dark pools of water in them, was lying in a soft green forest, powerful and spacious, from one end to the other of the brilliant sky. It seemed to Belov that the plane itself had not willingly lost altitude but the force of gravity of his entire being was bringing it closer and closer to the land.

Taking Belov to the German airfield, Baryshev had said.

"See first, you are going to the awards department and only then, with all the medals -- to the service. I want you to know: I am vainglorious, my personnel is my pride. Also, before I forget, tell your father that, if you go fishing, to use my rods."

Nadya took Belov aside, opened her bag, and looking sternly in his eyes, ordered:

"Remember: here, in the paper, you have a chicken. On the right, you have four hardboiled eggs, butter in the box and cocoa in the thermos. Father ordered me to tell you that you absolutely must eat normally."

Belov looked sadly at her, at the proud face with its short nose and still childish soft lips and gray green eyes under thick eyelashes. He asked:

"What about you?"

"What about me?"

"Will you be in Moscow?"

"Nadya shrugged ensued.

"Naturally, we live there." She offered her firm small hand. She reminded him: "You take your violin before the medals. They are in the box under the detector camps."

Henrich was the last.

"I will miss you, Johann."

"I will miss you, too," sadly smiled Belov.

Henrich turned to Baryshev.

"JohannaWeiss! One could be proud of such Germans."

"Well," Baryshev said. "My Belov is just as good." He asked: "Any questions? Not. Well, that is all. Time."

And Belov, trying to look for as long as possible at the faces dear to him, walked backward to the plane.

Now, the plane was going lower and lower, as though down a glassy slope. The moment the wheels touched the ground, suddenly one of the passengers, invisibly flying in the plane--Johann Weiss--disappeared. He disappeared silently, without any trace. Aleksandr Belov had no longer a double. Major Belov remained alone. For a second, he felt lonely. However, this feeling left him as fast as it had come.

And no one, even Aleksandr Belov, honored the death of Johann Weiss. No one!

Eagerly and impatiently, Belov sought among the faces of the welcoming crowd, that of his mother -- to him, the most important person in the world. That was the mother not only of Sasha Belov but of Johann Weiss as well, and, since she did not know him, Weiss's disappearance also did not make her sad.

That is how Johann Weiss -- Hauptsturmführer SD -- ended.

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